

# JRN600: CAPSTONE - PROPOSAL

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**OFFICE HOURS in CCE 267 (You may [Zoom in](#), but please email to confirm time):**

Mon, Tue & Thu – 1-3 p.m. or by appointment

## **COURSE OVERVIEW**

This course is designed to get you rolling and ready to complete your Master's capstone project next semester by producing a detailed, thorough proposal that includes all conceptualizing and preliminary reporting.

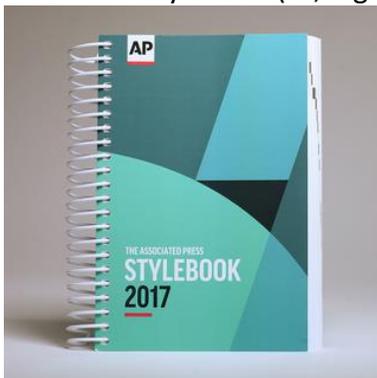
## **PURPOSE**

At the conclusion of this course, the assigned readings, class discussions and completed assignments should have helped you:

- Become *an expert* on the topic and idea you are pursuing for your Master's capstone project,
- To have conducted many interviews and located public documents that will be needed for the successful completion of the capstone project,
- To have thoroughly developed a comprehensive proposal that will serve as the roadmap/outline for the project,
- Understand what else you need to do toward the successful completion of the capstone project.

## **REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS**

- AP Stylebook (or, digital subscription to [APStylebook.com](https://www.apstylebook.com))



## GRADING

Your grade will comprise the total score of the following with a max of 200 points:

### \* Weekly reading responses (40 points/5 points per response)

We will meet nine times through the semester. These meetings do not have to be formal, but hinge on *engaged discussion*. You will turn in one- to three-page response papers over the assigned reading 24 hours before the meetings. In these response papers, you will answer the following questions: *How did the reporter know what they know? What did I learn about the process of reporting from this piece? What did I learn about writing style of from this piece?* You will also include in this paper **three questions or unique points for discussion**.

### \* Topic proposal (30 points)

You will write a proposal in essay form of your planned Master's capstone project. This should be approximately 500-600 words, about two pages, double-spaced. The proposal should include a brief description of the project, an explanation of why the project is important/relevant/interesting, as well as a brief description of potential sources (human, documentation). You are not expected to present a perfect, or final concept, but you should make sure that this proposal gives an idea of what you're planning to do. As with any project, yours may develop and slightly change as you progress and learn more about the topic. This is a framework, not something intended to lock you in.

### \* Research evidence report (30 points)

Write an 800- to 900-word, about three pages, double-spaced, report on the sources you found for your project. The report should include:

- A list of about 20 sources relevant to your project (books, popular articles, academic articles, online sources, people) – about a page
- Brief annotations for the six (6) most important sources: provide an overview of their content, relevancy and how they relate to the project – about a page
- An appendix with the first page of each of the six annotated sources

### \* Book review (40 points)

Write a 1,100-1,300-word, about four to five pages, double-spaced, review of a book relevant to your project. The review should encompass:

- A **short description** of your project topic and why/how the book as a whole relates to it,
- A **summary** of the book's content, organized by chapters or by topics, and why/how these chapters relate to your project,
- A **critical evaluation** of the book with particular attention to validity (accuracy), usefulness, uniqueness, and research/methodological gaps

### \* Final proposal (60 points)

The proposal, which is written in memorandum format (see below), is typically eight to 10 pages in length and requires students to conduct preliminary research in terms of identifying and securing public documents (via Freedom of Information requests when

necessary), identifying and conducting interviews, as well as charting out a detailed plan of how to present the information.

### **Abbreviated example of a final proposal**

**TO: Professor Molly Yanity**

**FROM: Student**

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**RE:** Capstone project outline

**Subject:** Identify the story subject/Working headline

**Scope:** Explain what the story will include and what you anticipate its limitations to be. *What is your story going to be about? What is it not about?*

**Need:** This section begins the argument to even do the story. Even if the need is obvious, it must be stated in strong, persuasive language. *Why is this story important? Who is the targeted audience? Why is this story important to that specific audience? Why you are well situated to tackle this story?*

**Methods:** Describe the game plan for the execution of this story. *What is the best approach to this story? A series of interview, plus documents story? How will this story be told?*

**Sources:** This section will be the most robust and should be the longest. It will include an exhaustive list of several human sources with contact information, of the primary documentation the student needs with links, copies and/or drafts of FOIA request letters, as well as an assessment of the leads that may come out of those documents. It should include direct quotes from key sources. The student may also take a little latitude in this section to speculate what may be found and to what the specific sources/documents might lead.

**Presentation:** Here, students will determine how the story will be presented and via what medium/media. *Is this a story for the web? Will the student use a specific web host to present the digital story, or simply post it to a web host, such as Shorthand or WordPress? Is it going to be a short documentary posted to YouTube? Is it simply a written article? Does it need to be told over the course of a series? If so, how will it be broken up? How will the student accent the story with photos, videos, audio clips, graphics and/or other multimedia?*

*Next, this section should include a narrative outline. Start with the LEDE and then break the outline into sections of the story, coming finally to the conclusion. (NOTE: The more you have written here, the less you have to do next semester. This doesn't lock you into the specific words you have to use, but it sure could give you a substantial springboard.)*

**Potential Hurdles:** Students identify potential problems in the reporting, producing and/or presentation of the story and begin to troubleshoot ways to overcome those problems. *Example: For this story, I need to access communication between the mayor and chief of*

*police. A FOIA request may take longer than the next semester allows, so I may need to adjust. This is how I plan to do that... etc.*

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **Attendance/Engagement**

This is a graduate-level course and attendance and full engagement are expected. This means you need to come to our meetings prepared (as previously mentioned, that you have done the reading, completed response papers, thought about it and answered questions). While in our meetings, you need to be on task. If you are working on other materials, or engaged in activities beyond the course, you may be asked to leave and that will count as an absence.

### **COVID-19/Zoom Option**

Unless the university changes its method of classroom delivery as defined at the beginning of the Fall '21 semester, physical attendance is required. Zoom is not an option and will not be used. If you find yourself required to quarantine, or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, please arrange with a classmate to get notes and turn in any assignments digitally.

**IF YOU MISS CLASS, it is YOUR responsibility to make up and/or turn in work.**

### **Academic Integrity**

Familiarize yourself with Quinnipiac University's policy on Academic Integrity. ([Available in full here.](#)) *Along with the University's policy, understand that made-up sources and/or made-up quotations will result in failing and/or lower grades.*

### **OFFICE OF STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY/BARRIERS TO LEARNING/YOUR RIGHTS**

Quinnipiac University is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, please feel welcome to discuss your concerns with me. If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, you may also want to meet with the Office of Student Accessibility, to begin this conversation or to request reasonable accommodations. Quinnipiac University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Please contact the Office of Student Accessibility by emailing [access@qu.edu](mailto:access@qu.edu), or by calling (203) 582-7600. If you have already been approved for accommodations through the Office of Student Accessibility, please meet with me so we can develop an implementation plan together. For names of people who can assist you with information regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act, please contact the Learning Commons.

Here is a link to Quinnipiac's policies that protect your civil rights, on campus and more broadly: <https://catalog.qu.edu/university-policies/>.

In regard to Title IX, please reach out to Dennis Kwarteng ([dennis.kwarteng@quinnipiac.edu](mailto:dennis.kwarteng@quinnipiac.edu)) in the Department of Cultural and Global Engagement. We are required to have the ADA information on our syllabi, and I strongly encourage everyone to include Title IX.