

Sociology Department Capstone Guiding Document

Capstone Overview

The Sociology Summit experience is designed for sociology majors to demonstrate their cumulative learning of sociological theory, research methods and substantive concepts and topics. The summit experience provides students an opportunity to conduct empirical research on a recommended topic or of special interest. It also allows students to communicate what they have learned through a substantial paper and an oral presentation. While encouraging students to think intentionally about the practice and theory of being a sociologist, one-on-one interactions with the instructor support and structure the process of conducting research, developing an argument, writing a research paper, and presenting results. This culminating experience of the sociology major should encourage students to apply and reflect on the skills and knowledge they have gained throughout their coursework for the major, and provide a context for sharing research with sociology faculty and other students.

The Sociology Department offers a range of Capstone eligible courses. Each semester, excluding summer, we provide at least two Capstone-eligible courses, one online and one in person. Students must sign up for a Capstone-eligible course and a one-credit SOC 4785 add-on course. The student should confirm that the class is Capstone eligible the semester they are enrolled. Capstone-eligible courses offered by the Sociology Department include:

SOC 4040 – Sociology of Gender and Sexuality
SOC 4080 - Men and Masculinities
SOC 4180 - Community Organization and Analysis
SOC 4240 - Sociology of Dis/Ability
SOC 4300 - Seminar: Sociology of Sport
SOC 4310 – Class Stratification and Power
SOC 4380 - Globalization & Development
SOC 4400 - Contemporary Social Movements
SOC 4530 – Advanced Privilege Studies**¹
SOC 4480 - Racial Storytelling - Travel course to Montgomery
SOC 4580 – Sociology of Disasters
SOC 4590 – Youth Gangs
SOC 4660 - Sociology of Medicine
SOC 4960 – Juvenile Delinquency**

Please check the Sociology Department website for a list of future Capstone offerings.

COMPASS Submit Requirement

SOC 4875 Capstone is a one-credit hour Summit Course for sociology students and must be taken simultaneously with one of the courses listed above. Students take a Summit Experience in

¹ ** This course is offered online most semesters.

their major to graduate from UCCS. Summit courses bridge general education goals with discipline objectives resulting in an enriching and culminating experience in a student's undergraduate education. Core components of Summit courses include a focus on core ethical principles of the discipline as well as communication skills.

This Summit course help students learn:

- Critical or creative thinking.
- Qualitative reasoning.
- Communication (public speaking/presenting, interpersonal (one to one) and/or group communication, or digital, visual, and performance media.)
- Core ethical principles in the discipline.

Essential Learning Outcomes:

- Gather, critically analyze and evaluate qualitative information within relevant disciplinary contexts.
- Communicate through a prepared, purposeful, presentation or goal-oriented interpersonal or group interaction.
- Demonstrate the core ethical principles and responsible methods of your discipline.

Requirements

Students will need a special permission number to register for SOC 4785, which you can request from your instructor. Students must take SOC 4785 in the same semester they take SOC 4590. Students cannot take SOC 4590 this semester and then, in a future semester, decide to enroll in the one-credit hour SOC 4785.

Students must meet the following prerequisites to register for SOC 4785: Prer., SOC 3070, SOC 3150, a minimum of 90 credits completed or consent of the instructor.

Capstone Research Paper

The Sociology Department requires students to write a 15-20 page research paper and publicly present their work, typically in the classroom setting. The paper's content must include a title page, abstract, introduction, literature review, theory, methods, findings, analysis/discussion, references, and appendix items (Please see Appendix A: Capstone Paper Content Example). The title page and abstract do not count toward the page limit and each instructor will provide their preferred writing style format (e.g., APA, MLA, etc.). The appendix items will include instruments for research and evidence you carried out the research (e.g., semi-structured interview guide, survey, content analysis document, interview transcripts, etc.).

IRB Approval (If needed):

If students conduct research involving human subjects and they plan to present at any venue outside the classroom (e.g., on campus, at a conference, in the community, etc.), they will need IRB approval. If you plan to only present your research in the classroom setting and have no future publication plans, then you are **NOT** required to submit an IRB. If you need to go through the IRB process, plan on completing the following steps before you can begin your research project: 1. Complete Citi-Training; 2. Submitted Completed IRB Application (includes a consent

form, recruiting materials, research instruments, and access letter/s if needed); 3. Receive IRB Approval.

Methods

In a Capstone course, students may conduct an empirical research topic of their choice or the instructor may provide a recommended methodological approach and topic. These options will vary by course, and you may want to check with the instructor before the course begins to determine which options are available for students. The following Research Methods are available and students may use any of these methods to design their own projects:

1. Life Narrative Interviews
2. Semi-Structured Interviews
3. Observational Research
4. Media Content and/or Literary Analysis
5. Ethnography
6. Surveys
7. Statistical Analysis of Existing Data Set

Appendix A: Capstone Paper Content Example

Your final paper should be about 20 pages of content. This does not include the required cover page or reference list. **Capstone students must also include an appendix that presents surveys, content analysis data dictionary, etc.** You will be required to use at least 15 peer-reviewed sources. **Capstone students are required to have 20.** Your final paper must be typed, with 1-inch margins, 12 point Times New Roman font, and double spaced with no additional spaces between paragraphs. **SPELLING AND GRAMMAR COUNT.** You must proof-read your paper. If you have concerns, please consult the Writing Center.

Your paper must include the following elements (to ensure that you have all of these elements in your paper, use these as the headings in your paper):

1. **Introduction (2 pages):** explain your research project
 - a. What is the topic?
 - b. Provide some background on the event, community, or peoples involved.
 - c. Why is this important, given the scope of the course?
 - d. How does your overall project address issues of sustainability?
 - e. What is your research question?
 - f. Identify and describe your general theoretical perspective.
 - g. State your argument.
2. **Literature Review (3+ pages):** situate your research within a broader body of academic literature.
 - a. What have academic scholars said about this topic theoretically?
 - b. What has their research demonstrated about this topic?
 - c. What aspects of the topic did their research fail to explore (where is the gap between what they have done and what you have done)?
 - d. How does your work address this gap?
 - i. What is your contribution to the literature?
 - ii. Are you extending a theoretical argument to a new context?
 - iii. Are you adding information about a previously under- or unresearched population?
 - iv. What is unique about your perspective?
 - v. How does your project address issues of sustainability?
3. ***Methodology (2+ pages):** explain how you conducted your research
 - a. Describe the sample and how subjects were included or excluded
 - b. Describe the way in which the data was collected
 - c. Describe how the data is coded and analyzed
 - d. What are the limitations of the data and methodology?

* This section is for capstone projects.

4. **Results (2+ pages):** Present your data. What did you find out?

5. **Analysis (4 – 6 pages):** How does your theoretical perspective help to make sense of the data you collected? What does it mean and why is it sociologically important?
6. **Conclusion (2+ pages):** Sum up your overall case. Discuss directions that your findings point to for future research and sustainability.
7. **Reference Section: PROPERLY list all relevant references.**
8. **Appendix:** Include your code book if you did a content analysis, questionnaire and transcription if you conducted interviews, survey and response tables, and all other relevant materials.