

# THE ETHICS OF RESISTANCE

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## SEMINAR HANDBOOK



Freedom Riders arrested in Jackson, Miss., in May 1961 (John Lewis top left).  
 Credit: Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

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## 1 - Participation

*Participation* counts for **10%** of the final grade. It includes multiple components.

**Attendance** is required and recorded. If the class is remote, I ask that you have your camera on and be visible for the entire duration of the class, except for ADA-related accommodations.

**Punctuality**: Coming to class late negatively affects your participation grade.

**Absences**: If you miss a class for *whatever* reason (including perfectly valid excuses like health and religious observance), you will find students' **notes** uploaded online. Make sure to go through these and contact the note-takers and/or me, Professor Delmas, if you have any questions or concerns.

You have one week from the day your return to class to write a **500-word make-up paper** critically examining the reading. In this paper you shall identify the author's goal in the text, thesis and main arguments, and engage with part of the ideas and arguments (e.g., articulating an objection or discussing something the author mentions only in passing; see the instructions for the Short Reflection for more details). Email me your make-up paper, writing in the subject email "PHIL 4901: Make-up paper for absence of [here insert the date of the class you missed]"

Absences are not penalized so long as you submit your make-up paper. If you fail to write a make-up paper, your absence will be penalized (your final participation grade, which is on a 1-10 scale, will be lowered by **half a point** (0.5) for every class absence you do not make up for).

**Participation**: This is a *discussion-based* class. In order for it to work, you must do the readings carefully and come to class prepared and ready to ask questions and share your reflections. You'll get to prepare for the seminar discussion in the small setting of the Socratic Pod, where you can test out loud your thoughts on the readings. Class participation does not simply entail speaking, but also listening in an engaged and respectful manner to the thoughts of your classmates. Your active participation during our guest speakers' interventions and in your classmates' Class Facilitation is of special importance. Please re-read the "Classroom climate" section of the syllabus: we will strive to cultivate and enact mutual respect and generosity in all

our interactions. If something prevents you from speaking in class and/or small groups, please come see me.

You will be graded for your participation in class in the following way:

**A:** student participates in every class in ways that show engagement with the material.

Students asks and responds to questions that further the discussion, connects with other students and furthers the overall learning of the class

**B:** student participates in some but not all classes, contributions may or may not be connected to the readings, topics or concepts from class

**C:** student participates from time to time but not regularly

**D-F:** inadequate participation. Student rarely participates or contributes to class

Please remember that all discussion in class must be **respectful**. Discussion may get heated, involved, and excited—and that's great! I encourage students to disagree with each other and to raise points that challenge each other's view. But this must always be done in a way which shows respect for the other person. It must be done in a constructive spirit and for the sake of mutual *understanding* (not just winning an argument). Our goal is to create a respectful and friendly atmosphere, where all participants feel comfortable pursuing intellectual inquiry. Students who damage the atmosphere of respect and collegiality—by being personally insulting, talking over each other, cutting each other off, or showing disrespectful behavior in any way—damage the learning environment for their peers and will be asked to leave.



## 2 – Notes

*Notes* counts for **5%** of the final grade. It includes different components.

**Note-taking:** Every class meeting, two students will bring their laptops to class and take notes for the benefit of everyone (especially missing students). You will sign up for two days of note-taking during the first week of class. You will clean up and organize your notes with the other note-taker and email them to me so I can upload the document under the relevant module.

**The syllabus and handbook quiz** counts toward your Notes grade.

**Peer assessment:** I will regularly ask you to evaluate the quality of your peers' work, including their class facilitation and capstone presentations, the purpose being (a) to ensure you are fully, critically engaged with your fellow students' presentation and (b) to crowdsource students' performance grade.

See Evaluation of Class Facilitation, p. 8 *infra*, for details on how to evaluate students' Class Facilitation.

I will communicate the instructions for evaluating Capstone presentations in due time.



### 3 - Socratic Pods

*Socratic Pods* counts for **5%** of the final grade.

You will each be a part of a “**Socratic Pod**” with 2-3 other students, whom you’ll meet every week throughout the semester (online or in-person, your choice). The goal of this assignment is to help you collaboratively prepare and engage with the material, through Socratic discussions in which you ask open-ended questions, listen closely to each other, think critically, and articulate your own thoughts in response to the thoughts of others (this method is also called *maieutics* or “intellectual midwifery”).

Socratic pods meet the day before class for at least 30 min. During these meetings, you will share your notes on the readings, clarify your understanding of the text, try to answer the questions I posed, focusing on the one specially assigned to your group (when applicable \*), and come up with other questions. In particular, you will: identify the problem the author is trying to solve, reconstruct their main thesis and arguments, and discuss anything you (a) don’t understand or are not sure about and (b) find particularly thought-provoking. You may arrive at a clear statement of your own position then, but it’s totally fine if you don’t: the class discussion will further help you understand the text and articulate your thoughts.

\* I almost always provide questions to guide your reading. I plan to entrust particular Socratic Pods with answering particular questions. You could then expect to be “on call” for the issue in question.

Students in each Socratic pod can organize as they wish. For instance, you can split the text in 2-3 parts and charge each student to focus on one passage; you can share all your notes on a Google doc; you can take turns leading the discussion (with the understanding that the leader has put extra work into preparing).

At the end of each Socratic pod meeting, one person in the group will summarize the discussion in a 400-500-word note (aka. “**Socratic memo**”) that includes:

- Present pod members’ names
- Your planned labor division prior to the meeting (who did what?)

- Your attempts (successful or not) to clarify particular concepts or passages
- Your answers to the questions I posed and esp. the one I may have singled out for you
- The passages and issues you focused on and what came out of it

While these memos may include bullet points, they must be fully written (in full sentences only). You'll upload your memo on Canvas before class. I will give feedback on those memos early on so you know whether you're on the right track.

Socratic memos are graded on a 1-5 point scale (5 = complete). You may **skip** 3 Socratic pod meetings for the semester. Just write in lieu of the memo that you jointly decided to skip the meeting for that day.

After 4-5 weeks, I will ask you if you want to reshuffle the Socratic Pods. Please let me know as soon as possible if you have any **issues** in your Socratic pod. Since the assignment is essentially collaborative, it requires and hinges on everyone's active collaboration. I thus reserve the right to bar any student from taking part in the activity if I come to find that they are, say, missing meetings, not pulling their weight, or otherwise undermining the pod's collaborative dynamic.

Your **Socratic pod grade** includes:

- Your group's Socratic memos grade
- Your individual grade, as determined by your Socratic peers' monthly assessment of your contribution to the group



## 4 - Class Facilitation

*Class Facilitation* counts for **15%** of the final grade.

For most class meetings, one student leads part of the discussion. As Class Facilitator (CF), you will know the entire material for the day inside out, which requires having carefully read the text(s) several times and properly highlighted and annotated it.

Presentations should be about 15-20 minutes.

- Provide some background and context for the article/chapter– what are the issues being discussed? Why are they important? Do they connect to other ideas we've talked about or read in class?
- Walk us through the main arguments as clearly possible and *explain* the ideas in your own words. This should deepen and increase the class's understanding of the article/chapter. A summary is not sufficient: a good analysis provides an explanation of the key concepts and a rationale for the text's logic.
- You are welcome to use PPT and/or a handout. If you use a handout, make sure it is no more than 2 pages long, and email it to Prof. Delmas ahead of time (at least 1 hour before class) so she can print copies for everyone.
- Include questions for the class to make sure they are engaged and that they understand. Try to make your presentation interactive and engaging.
- Conclude with some preliminary thoughts that you have come up with (strengths, weaknesses, points you're interested to discuss, etc.)

As a CF, you do not need to attend your Socratic Pod meeting for that day.

Keep me in the loop: let me know how your preparation is going and whether you have any questions or concerns.

**Evaluation of Class Facilitation:** Students will assign a grade to each individual CF student. Your evaluation will be based on the evidence each CF student gives in class that they seriously prepared and thoughtfully engaged with the material. In particular, you will pay attention to:

- The clarity, precision, and strength of their reconstruction of the author's argument
- The clarity and usefulness of their explanation of key concepts
- Their general mastery of the text
- Their ability to answer or at least thoughtfully grapple with my and your questions (if we didn't have time for these, you obviously cannot count it against them)

**A/90-100%** Excellent/Above Average: Student explained the material in a clear and effective way. There was no question that the student had a *deep* understanding of the reading, the topic and was able to make connections to other topics and concepts from the class. Student was able to keep fellow students engaged by checking if students are understanding and fellow students leave class with a deeper understanding

**B/80-90%** Very Good: Student restates what was in the reading in a way that is accurate but does not demonstrate a deep knowledge of the reading or issues being discussed, does not necessarily add clarity or insight.

**C/70-80%** Good/Fair: Student does an adequate job summarizing the reading but presents in a monotone and it's not entirely clear they understand what they are saying. Doesn't find ways to engage fellow students. No deep understanding is demonstrated.

**D-F/50-70%** Poor/Inadequate: Some major problems in the presentation and/or discussion

- Points may be added or taken away for presentation materials (i.e., if the PPT is particularly helpful or well done or conversely, if the PPT was unhelpful, was it thrown together at the last minute)
- Points may be added or taken away for not adequately leading the discussion. Points will be taken away if the discussion leader does not actively participate and lead the discussion or if they do not keep the conversation focused and let it free flow on whatever topic comes up

Students self-sign up for their CF day on Canvas asap. You can already sign up, so the longer you wait, the less choice you will have. The CF shows a limit of 2 students per group, but please pick an empty set so we have more rather than less days with CF.

I note in the syllabus that you should always write the course number in your emails to me. When you email me about your Class Facilitation, **always write "PHIL 4901 CF [name of author you're presenting on]" in the email subject.**

Within 24 hours of your CF, you will submit your **CF Assessment** on Canvas. In it you answer the following questions:

- How would you describe your preparation for this presentation? What did you do well? What would you have done differently?
- How do you feel about your CF performance? What did you do well? What would you have done differently?
- Suggest a grade for yourself using the grading rubric above.



- Did you enjoy the experience?
- Is there anything you think we could do to improve the CF assignment?

The CF presentation grade is worth 15% of the final grade. It includes:

- 8%: Your classmates' peer evaluation of your performance
- 5%: My evaluation of your performance
- 2%: Your completed CF Assessment



## 5 - Capstone

*Capstone* counts for **65%** of the final grade. This grade includes preparatory work, a conference presentation, and the final research paper itself.

- A. Preparatory Capstone Work: 10%
  - a. Select topic (ungraded)
  - b. Topic overview (1%)
  - c. Bibliography (1%)
  - d. Lightning presentations (1%)
  - e. Preliminary outline (1%)
  - f. Draft due to Prof. Delmas (5%)
  - g. Draft due for peer review (1%)
- B. Capstone Presentation: 10%
- C. Final Capstone Paper: 45%

A note about grading: the steps in the writing process listed below are meant to encourage a dialogue between the student and professor. The most valuable feedback you'll be able to get will be one-on-one. Though individual meetings are not required, they are highly encouraged and welcomed. I am more than happy to meet with you at any stage of development, and frequently, to hash out ideas.

### A. Preparatory Capstone Work

A capstone paper is very different from a regular final paper in most undergraduate courses. The capstone paper requires you to become an expert in a topic, and to develop your own, original position on the topic, supported by rigorous philosophical argumentation. It is definitely not the kind of paper you can just sit down and write at the end of the semester before the due date. The quality of your capstone paper should be such that you could potentially publish it or confidently include it in an application for graduate school. Most students are unfamiliar with this kind of project and what it takes to complete it. Below, I

explain each stage of the writing process in detail. The Capstone is scaffolded into 7 steps:

### **Step 1: Select a topic (Wednesday, October 6, 11:59pm)**

Pick a topic that you want to spend the semester researching and writing about. Start with a general topic (e.g., politically motivated lawbreaking); your goal will be to identify a specific issue/question (e.g., how should democratic states treat illiberal and anti-democratic disobedience by their citizens?). It's okay not to know right away what problem you'll tackle. You can write about domestic or global resistance, contemporary or historical movements, or scholarly debates (e.g., Raz vs. Lefkowitz vs. Brownlee on the moral right to civil disobedience). You have to know what philosophers and political theorists have said about your topic. In addition to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy's* article on "Civil Disobedience," look through the supplementary reading list on Canvas and check out *The Cambridge Companion to Civil Disobedience* (ed. William E. Scheuerman, 2021) and [PhilPapers.org](http://PhilPapers.org).

#### *Examples of possible paper topics:*

The right to revolution  
The human right to resist oppression  
The moral right to civil disobedience  
The duty to resist  
Virtues and vices in resistance  
Global or domestic labor justice  
Democracy and resistance  
Immigration-related resistance (e.g., border-crossing as resistance, undocumented migrants' protests, refugee resistance, Sanctuary cities)  
Legal issues (e.g., punishment of civil disobedience, anti-protest legislation)  
Armed self-defense  
Political rioting, vandalism, looting  
Coercion vs. persuasion  
Protest policing  
Disability resistance  
Prison resistance  
Animal liberation  
Environmental activism, ecotage, Land and Water Protection  
Indigenous resistance  
Epistemic resistance  
Aesthetic violence, guerrilla warfare  
Terrorism  
Independentist movements  
Decolonization  
Secession  
Digital disobedience (e.g., DDoS, hacktivism, open-software movement)  
Self-destructive resistance (e.g., hunger strikes, self-immolation)  
Anarchist/antifa tactics (e.g., black bloc, no platforming, street medicking)  
Whistleblowing and leaks

Conscientious objection  
Public health-related resistance  
Pro-democracy movements

### **Step 2: Topic overview (Wednesday, October 13, 11:59pm)**

Demonstrate that you have a preliminary understanding of the *philosophical issues* at stake in your topic. Give a 1-2 page, or 300-600 word overview of the topic. Consult—and cite—1-2 sources that can provide you with an overview (including historical, political, or legal background, and overview of the subfield of philosophy you'll explore). For instance, if you write about Indigenous resistance, you'll need some historical background and you might work at the intersection of postcolonial philosophy and just war theory.

### **Step 3: Bibliography (Wednesday, October 27, 11:59pm)**

Your Capstone will engage with the philosophical “conversation” on your topic. To do this adequately, you'll need a literature review. Step 3 of the Capstone gets you started by asking you to find the 5 most important philosophy pieces on your topic. You're welcome to use readings from the course in your paper, but you can't include those for this assignment. Your sources must be philosophy articles (not economics, international relations, sociology, etc.), even though you're welcome—and invited—to use sources from other disciplines in your paper. Feel free to approach me to make the case that your bibliography should include an article you found in a law review or journal focused on human rights, peace studies, or women's and gender studies. But even if I agree, you'll need the other 4 sources you write a bibliography entry for to be “straight-up” philosophy (basically, an article found in a philosophy journal or a chapter in a book written by a philosopher<sup>1</sup>).

Do NOT pick the first 5 sources you come across. First, skim multiple sources. Then pick the 5 most important pieces on your topic. These could be “most important” because other people refer to them when discussing your topic, or because they were discussed in an overview article on your topic, or because you think they are most relevant to your topic, even if they do not directly address your topic.

Note: the first time you refer to an author, give their full name. After that, refer to their last name only. Write first “Candice Delmas argues...” After that, “Delmas argues...”

Please follow this citation style in all your capstone work. Here are examples of book, article, and book chapter citations:

Delmas, Candice. 2018. *A Duty to Resist: When Disobedience Should Be Uncivil*, New York: Oxford University Press.

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<sup>1</sup> Some philosophy journals: *Ethics*; *Philosophy and Public Affairs*; *Journal of Political Philosophy*; *Social Theory and Practice*; *Journal of Moral Philosophy*; *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*; *Contemporary Political Theory*; *Journal of Global Ethics*; *Social Philosophy Today*; *Politics, Philosophy and Economics*; *Law and Philosophy*; *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*; *Journal of Social Philosophy*; *Philosophy and Social Criticism*; *Res Publica*; *Ergo*; *Analysis*; *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*; *Criminal Law and Philosophy*.

Delmas, Candice. 2018. "Is Hacktivism the New Civil Disobedience?" *Raisons Politiques* 69(1): 63–81.

Delmas, Candice. 2021. "(In)Civility," in *The Cambridge Companion to Civil Disobedience*, William Scheuerman (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 203–230.

Use parenthetical citations for quotations and paraphrases. Use footnotes if you need to include more information (Delmas 2018: 4).<sup>2</sup>

#### **Step 4: Lightning presentation (Friday, October 29 in class)**

Each student will speak for 2 minutes (max) on their chosen topic. Say concisely what topic you've chosen, why, and what you're hoping for from the project. The goal here is community building and to see what connections there are between student projects.

#### **Step 5: Preliminary outline (Wednesday, November 3, 11:59pm)**

This should be about 2 pages, and needs to include:

- i. Title
- ii. Thesis – statement of the position you will take
- iii. Summary/overview of the argument
- iv. Objections – what are the strongest objections to your view?
- v. Bibliography of scholarly sources (8-10 sources minimum)

#### **Step 6: Full draft due (Wednesday, November 10, 11:59pm)**

I will give you feedback on your draft. Papers will be returned by November 23.

You will not get a letter grade for this draft. Your grade will correspond to how complete each section is and will reflect the quality of the work presented. This should be the best possible draft you can come up with. If it seems like you wrote it at the last minute, if it doesn't contain all the relevant sections, if the research is inadequate, etc., you will receive a low or failing grade for this part of your capstone.

Length: you must have a complete draft of at least 15 (double-spaced) pages, not including your bibliography.

#### **Step 7: Draft Workshop (Friday, December 3, in class)**



Be prepared to share your full draft of your paper with 2-3 other students, having extensively revised it since the last submission. You will work together to give detailed feedback on each other's drafts. Peer feedback is graded.

I don't expect you to get everything exactly right at each stage; in fact, I encourage you to be open and willing to change the direction of your topic through dialogue with myself and your peers. However, I do ask that you complete each step fully, with your best effort and on time.

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<sup>2</sup> You might use a footnote to give some data that supports a claim but that isn't completely relevant. Or you might use a footnote to show that you know other people's views on a topic.

Grade: Each step **must** be completed in order to pass the class. Your grade for each step will be based on quality of the submission. If your work is at an adequate level and complete, you will receive full grade (100%). Please note that your grade for each step will be lowered if the assignment is:

- Incomplete
- Too short or too long
- Late
- Parts are insufficient, unclear and/or it needs to be re-submitted
- Missed entirely

## B. Capstone Presentation

We will hold a 2-day long conference at the end of the term during which you will present your work.

Students will organize into panels of 2 or 3, to be determined based on topics.

Your presentation should be about 12-15 min long. There will be at least 5 min. per person for questions and answers (Q&A).

### **Guidelines**

An oral presentation is a prepared, purposeful presentation designed to increase knowledge, foster understanding and promote change in the listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.

Think about your presentation as an opportunity to teach the class about the topic that you have been researching. To do this, include the following.

1. Begin by introducing your topic and highlighting its significance. You may include statistics or other data to show the importance of your topic. Alternatively, you may find another way to connect your topic to what we've been discussing in class. This should be the place where you draw us into your topic.
2. Introduce your thesis – that is, the argument that you are going to make in your research paper
3. Walk us through the steps in your argument. This step should be the bulk of your presentation so make sure it's as clear and as understandable as possible.
4. Are there obvious criticisms of your position or are there thinkers that your view opposes? If so, say who or what and explain how you will respond to them.
5. Conclude your presentation by summarizing your argument
6. Field discussion questions

Questions from students can take many forms – asking for more information about a point, challenging an idea, making connections between the presentation and your own research. Questions help presenters strengthen their ideas.

Students will grade each other's presentations (anonymously), using the following grading rubric:

	Typical of score 9.0-10 points (A)	Typical of score 8-8.9 points (B)	Typical of score 7-7.9 points (C)	Typical of score 6-6.9 points (D)
Preparation and organization	a. Well-prepared. Clear evidence of advanced preparation b. Well organized and included an introduction, body, transitions, conclusions	a. Basically prepared but not as prepared as student could have been b. Some organization but more structure needed	a. Somewhat unprepared b. Some structure in the presentation but insufficient	a. Somewhat unprepared b. Some structure in the presentation but insufficient
Explanation of ideas	Able to explain complex philosophical ideas clearly. Able to fully answer questions	Basic explanation but lacking in ability to fully explain ideas	Somewhat unable to explain ideas	Not able to explain philosophical ideas
Communication/Delivery	Speaks clearly, appears confident and knowledgeable	Delivery is competent but not as clear or forceful as could be	Delivery is lacking in some way	Very poor delivery
Supporting materials	Supporting materials (power points, videos, images, handouts) increase understanding	Some supporting materials	Few if any supporting materials	No supporting materials

### C. Final Capstone Paper

The final paper must be between 4,500 and 5,100 words (about 15-17 pages), excluding bibliography and footnotes. Make sure you have a word count at the top of your page. Papers must be double-spaced, 12-point font, and conform to all APA, MLA or Chicago Style rules for writing research papers. Spelling, sentence structure, and other rules of proper grammar will also be part of the grading process. The majority of the grade will be based upon content, logic of your argument, and quality of research. A detailed explanation of the requirements of the paper, along with a grading rubric, is below.

Your paper should involve substantial revisions based on comments received from myself and your peers. Please include a **one-page reflection** on your revision process. Up to 10% will be deducted on your final paper grade if revisions from your draft are not sufficient.

As this is the first seminar I teach at Northeastern, I can't share sample capstones that I graded. But I am including on Canvas some sample capstones used by Prof. Serena Parekh for her Global Justice seminar.

### Capstone Paper Requirements

Your paper must include the following:

1. Introduction
2. Clear statement of your thesis and how you will be arguing for it
3. General discussion of the topic/problem based on adequate research
4. Discussion of philosophical literature – what have others said about this and why are their views wrong, limited or insufficient
5. Argument for your view: this will be the core of your paper
- \*4 and 5 may be done together in one section or separately\*
6. Conclusion

#### 1. Introduction

- Introduces the topic of your paper and gives some context for its significance
- Introduces the philosophical perspectives/issues you will be discussing. Your paper should make clear at the very beginning why this is a *philosophy* paper and not a policy analysis or political prescription
- This should draw your reader in and make it clear why this topic is meaningful or important and why we should consider your view

#### 2. Thesis

- A thesis is a clear statement of the position you will take and why: I will argue that XYZ BECAUSE ABC
- If you get in the habit of spotting the thesis in each week's readings, writing your own will be easier
  - Example 1: I will argue that the most commonly held arguments for the moral duty to obey the law support duties to resist injustice.
  - Example 2: I will argue that the common arguments in support of civil disobedience can be extended to support some types of uncivil disobedience.
- It is important that this be as clear and precise as possible.
- Should be stated in the Introduction and easy to find. Explain each term. No one should wonder, what is this paper about? What is the author going to be saying? Where is this going?

#### 3. Research and General Discussion of the Topic



- Your paper should give a sufficient overview of the topic so that a general reader can understand it – should be broad but nuanced
- It should *not* contain too much information, or details that are not relevant to your argument
- You do NOT need to explain every detail of the problem
- may include statistics, history, the political context, etc. to show the *empirical grounding* for the questions you are discussing
- **Research:** here part of your grade will be based on whether or not you have demonstrated an excellent/adequate/insufficient understanding of the topic and the philosophical debate around the topic. Was the most important research on this issue covered? Were you primarily relying on secondary sources?

#### 4. Discussion of Philosophical Literature

- What is the philosophical issue at the heart of your paper? Explain the debate and what's at stake
- Which philosophers write on it and what do they say? How do their views relate to yours? Explain their views and why you find them limited, insufficient or problematic
- summaries must present the strongest, most accurate versions of the views you will be disagreeing with
- this is the section where you will demonstrate that you're aware of the philosophical debate on the issue
- make sure you discuss primary sources, not summaries written by others

#### 5. Argument for your view

- this is the main job of your paper: to make a *philosophical* argument about some dimension of the issue that you're discussing
- make each premise of your argument as clear as possible
- provide supporting evidence and arguments where necessary
- if possible: address an objection to your position
- the goal of this section is to persuade readers that your view is the one they should adopt on the issue/problem

\*\*\* Steps 4 & 5 may be done together in one section or separately\*\*\*

#### 6. Conclusion

- Wrap up your paper, making clear why your view is important

**Quality of your writing.** Aim for clarity above all else – if the reader needs to re-read sentences to understand them, your argument cannot be made effectively. You can't make a persuasive argument without effective writing. When you are in the final stages, try one of these techniques: Read paper out loud – 1. To yourself 2. To others 3. Have someone read it to you.

#### Common pitfalls

There are several common mistakes that students make in their capstones. I list some below so that you can be aware of them and, hopefully, avoid them:

- Choosing a topic that is too broad. When you go to write the paper, you realize that you can't do an adequate job in 15 pages
- Spending too much of your paper on the overview of the topic. You'll probably get so interested in your topic that you'll think that everyone needs to understand it in detail. But for the purpose of this paper, just include the minimum a reader needs in order to understand your argument. Alternatively, you may choose to write on a topic that you don't understand very well and have not sufficiently researched. Remember, you should be an "expert" on the topic you're writing about
- Not taking the ongoing philosophical conversation seriously. An important part of the capstone is learning how to engage in an intellectual conversation. If you don't understand or are unaware of what others have said about your topic, you risk writing a paper that is uninformed or superficial.
- Not revising their final drafts sufficiently. Some students think that they are happy with their first drafts and just resubmit a version of it (or very close to it) as their final draft. But one of the most important aspects of the writing process is revising your initial draft.

### **Important do's**

- Define all technical or key terms fully, the first time you use them
- Remember to attribute ideas to their source. *This includes ideas that you paraphrase.*
- Avoid passive voice ("it will be argued," "it has been said") and use the active voice ("I will argue," "Delmas claims")
- Avoid being shallow when you use a philosopher – don't just drop a name or a concept and then apply it. ANY CONCEPT YOU USE has to be explained fully, with reference to THE ORIGINAL IDEA (not someone's paraphrase or a Wikipedia article) and only then can you use it in your argument. Remember this is a work of scholarship, not journalism, blog post, discussion with a friend, etc.
- Avoid simplistic thesis or conclusion. For example, in order to solve global hunger, we should send people more food. In order to solve climate change, people in the US have a moral responsibility stop using fossil fuels. If something seems too easy, there's probably a reason why – your job is to go deeper and understand what makes the problem so difficult to solve

You should go through multiple drafts. The effort you put into your draft is *the* key to your success.

## Grading Rubric for Capstone Research Paper

Note on grading: the information below is meant to give you a sense of what you need to achieve to get into a certain grade category (i.e., A, B, C, etc.). Your actual score in each category may be a B, B-, B+, etc., depending on whether you are on the higher, lower or middle

end of the spectrum. A grade of an “A” will receive a score of 94-95, with 96-100 being reserved for work that exceeds the requirements laid out in the first column.

	A	B	C	D/F
Introduction and Conclusion <b>10 Points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Effectively introduces or concludes the paper</li> <li>b. Introduction: draws reader in and creates interest in topic</li> <li>c. conclusion: ties things together and makes clear the importance of the paper</li> <li>d. Contains no exaggeration or over generalizations</li> <li>e. should make clear what motivates the thesis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Introduces/ concludes well but some important aspects are left out</li> <li>b. may not fully bring out the relevance of the topic</li> <li>c. May contain exaggerations or over-generalizations</li> <li>d. doesn't create as strong an impact as it could</li> <li>e. may not be as clear as is necessary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Does not introduce the topic appropriately or convince the reader of why it is important or interesting</li> <li>b. Contains exaggerations or over generalizations</li> <li>c. Conclusion fails to tie paper together or make most important aspects clear</li> </ul>	Some major problem with this aspect of the paper
Thesis <b>10 Points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The thesis is stated clearly – no difficulty determining what is being said</li> <li>b. the thesis is insightful, deep, and interesting</li> <li>c. sentences leading up and following the thesis aid in understanding it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The reader is able to determine what the thesis is, but it is not clear or explicit</li> <li>b. The thesis is appropriate but not particularly deep, insightful or interesting</li> <li>c. It's possible to misinterpret or misunderstand the thesis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. It's not clear that the paper has a thesis</li> <li>b. The thesis is not clear or appropriate</li> <li>c. Even a careful reader might have trouble determining what the thesis is</li> </ul>	Some major problem with this aspect of the paper
Research and general discussion of topic <b>20 Points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Demonstrates a broad understanding of the topic and includes relevant information needed to frame the topic (statistics, history, context, etc.)</li> <li>b. does not contain marginal information</li> <li>c. excellence level of research – all</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Demonstrates a general understanding of the topic but relevant questions remain unaddressed;</li> <li>b. too much or not enough background</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Does not provide a sufficient general discussion of the topic.</li> <li>b. Fails to provide some necessary background information.</li> </ul>	Some major problem with this aspect of the paper

	important ideas covered			
Discussion of philosophical literature <b>25 Points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Clearly and accurately presents philosophical arguments</li> <li>b. Includes all relevant steps and premises, and excludes anything irrelevant</li> <li>c. It's clear that you understood the author's arguments perfectly and in-depth</li> <li>d. no obvious sources are left out.</li> <li>e. able to explain why other views are inadequate or problematic</li> <li>f. uses primary sources and does not rely on secondary sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The way the arguments are presented are valid</li> <li>b. Some important elements of the arguments may be missing or inarticulate</li> <li>c. May contain some irrelevant details or lack some premises</li> <li>d. Demonstrates a basic but not deep understanding of the arguments</li> <li>e. basic level of research, but did not demonstrate a mastery of the field</li> <li>f. may contain an insufficient number of sources, the wrong kind of sources or insufficient number of philosophical sources</li> <li>e. doesn't fully say what's wrong with these views</li> <li>d. uses secondary sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The paper does not present the arguments of the philosophers clearly</li> <li>b. Crucial premises are missing</li> <li>c. Some ideas are misrepresented or fails to represent the author's reasoning</li> <li>d. It's not clear that you understood the arguments fully</li> <li>e. important authors or ideas are excluded</li> </ul>	Some major problem with this aspect of the paper
Philosophical Argument to support your thesis <b>25 Points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The argument given to defend the thesis is strong, clear and persuasive</li> <li>b. Reasons and explanation are given to support each claim</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. An argument is given but is not convincing or well-structured</li> <li>b. It contains irrelevant or unsupported premises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. No argument is given to support the thesis</li> <li>b. What there is of an argument is not clearly structured</li> </ul>	Some major problem with this aspect of the paper
Writing <b>10 Points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Clarity – every sentence is perfectly clear.</li> <li>b. Precision – the reader gets the impression that you have carefully thought about your writing and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Clarity – basically clear but a few awkward or unclear sentences</li> <li>b. Precision – generally the writing is careful but could be improved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Clarity – the reader has to work hard to understand what you are trying to say</li> <li>b. Precision – writing seems sloppy, like it was written quickly</li> </ul>	Some major problem with this aspect of the paper

	gone over several drafts c. Word choice – almost always exact d. Organization – well organized. Reader never wonders where the paper is going	c. Word choice – basically good but sometimes inexact, ambiguous or awkward d. Organization – basically well organized	or in one draft c. Word choice – often inexact or ambiguous d. Organization – the structure of the paper leaves the reader wondering where it is going;	
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## Recap of Capstone assignment

	Task	Deadline	Grade weight
Preparatory Capstone Work	Step 1: Topic	W Oct. 6	N/A
	Step 2: Topic overview	W Oct. 13	1%
	Step 3: Bibliography	W Oct. 27	1%
	Step 4: Lightning presentation	F Oct. 29	1%
	Step 5: Preliminary outline	W Nov. 3	1%
	Step 6: draft due to Prof. Delmas	W Nov. 10	5%
	Step 7: draft due for peer review	F Dec. 3	1%
Capstone presentation	Conference	T Nov. 30 and Dec. 7	10%
Capstone paper	Final submission	M Dec. 13	45%

