

# ANARCHISM

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## SEMINAR HANDBOOK



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# 1. Participation

*Participation* counts for **5%** of the final grade. It includes multiple components.

**Attendance** is required and recorded.

**Punctuality**: Coming to class late negatively affects the seminar and will be reflected in your participation grade.

**Absences**:

A seminar is a community of the curious working together to help each other understand difficult materials. Each person in the seminar is irreplaceable. As such, it is expected that everyone will be present for every class. If someone is unable to attend class in person because of being sick, we can set up a Zoom option. If someone is completely unable to attend, it presents us with a loss—the loss of the impact and contributions from that student. In order for the class to still benefit from their absent fellow student’s contribution, we ask that the absent post a reply to the Socratic Pods’ structured questions on the Discussion forum, including the one posted by the absent person’s own pod. This shares some of what the absent student would have brought to the discussion. Even if the absent person was present for their Pod meeting, we know that their contributions go beyond that which is found in the memo. This is not an equal substitution for the contributions each student makes in class which echo and resonate through a discussion, but it brings the absent student back into the discussion and keeps everyone present in the seminar community.

It is the responsibility of each member of the seminar to make sure that they complete what they have agreed to do; the seminar as a whole relies on each other. For pods and for your *Praxis* component, the expectation is that each student will make all scheduled commitments. In the event that the student cannot meet a commitment, good communication and showing up in any way that one can is of utmost importance and crucial to maintaining the communities we build around us in this room and in the city outside these walls.

**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 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 us.

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; student 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! We encourage students to raise points that challenge our and other students' views. 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. This will not be tolerated.

What counts as participation?

Not everyone is comfortable with public speaking, or quick on their feet. In light of this, students can do well on *Participation* without speaking a lot in class.

- Engaging on the Discussion forum for the day's module (before or after class) counts as participation. You may answer other Socratic Pods' structured questions (see p. 5 *infra*) or just debrief about our class discussion.
- Posting on the class's [Anarchism Glossary](#) (edit existing concepts definitions; add new ones).
- Emailing the professors to share your thoughts on the class discussion that happened that day/week or to tell us about a conversation you had with other people about issues we discussed in class counts as class participation. So does visiting professors during office hours to discuss the material.

## 2. Socratic Pods

*Socratic Pods* counts for **8%** 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 at some point before class for around 1 hour. During these meetings, you will share your notes on the readings, clarify your understanding of the text, try to answer the questions we 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.

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).

### **Socratic Memos**

At the end of each Socratic pod meeting, the group will summarize the discussion in a “Socratic memo.” These memos are 400-750-word (no strict word limit) and they include:

- Date and time of meeting
- Present/absent 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 we posed
- The passages and issues you focused on and what came out of it

- One structured question \*\* to discuss with the class and which you will also post on the Discussion Forum

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. We 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** 1 Socratic pod meeting for the semester. Just write in lieu of the memo that you jointly decided to skip the meeting for that day.

\*\* A **structured question** tightly relates to the assigned readings by involving a specific textual citation and some attempt at interpretation. For instance, the question might take this form: "On page XX, Author writes 'blah blah blah'. We think that means that  $p$ , but we are unsure of this because of such-and-such a reason. It matters how we understand what Author says because of  $x$  and  $y$ ."

Please let us 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. We thus reserve the right to bar any student from taking part in the activity if we 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, as assessed by Profs. Delmas and Kelting
- Your individual grade, as determined by your Socratic peers' assessment of your contribution to the group and your own self-assessment

### 3. Class Facilitation

*Class Facilitation* counts for **7%** of the final grade.

For most class meetings, one or two students lead part of the discussion on different texts.

As Class Facilitator (CF), you will know the material you're presenting on inside out, which requires having carefully read the text(s) several times and properly highlighted and annotated it. Always make sure to add proper references (page numbers) to your explanations and quotes.

Presentations should be about 20-25 minutes (without counting the time for discussion).

- 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 Profs. Delmas and Kelting ahead of time (at least 1 hour before class) so they 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.)

You will also post definitions of key terms (with both quotes [with references] and paraphrase) on the class's [Anarchism Glossary](#).

As a CF, you do not need to attend your Socratic Pod meeting for that day, in the interest of giving you more time for preparation, though it may be helpful for you to still attend, especially to discuss the rest of the texts.

Keep us in the loop: let us 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 and/or thoughtfully grapple with our questions (if we didn't have time for these, you obviously cannot count it against them). CFs can of course remain confused about various elements of the text; they should just be able to explain why it is confusing.

**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, or if it looks like it was thrown together at the last minute)
- Points may be added or taken away based on the CF's leading and moderating of the discussion (thoughtful interactive engagement of the class vs. passivity and disengagement)

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.

When you email Profs. Delmas and Kelting about your Class Facilitation, **always write "PHIL 4901/REL 4903 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 7% of the final grade. It includes:

- o Your classmates' peer evaluation of your performance (possibly modified by Profs. Delmas and Kelting)
- o Your completed CF Assessment
- o Your own evaluation of your performance



## 4. Praxis

Praxis counts for **30%** of the final grade.

“We are not in the least afraid of ruins. We are going to inherit the earth. There is not the slightest doubt about that. The bourgeoisie might blast and ruin its own world before it leaves the stage of history. We carry a new world here, in our hearts...That world is growing in this minute.” Buenaventura Durruti

“We must make our freedom by cutting holes in the fabric of this reality, by forging new realities which will, in turn, fashion us. Putting yourself in new situations constantly is the only way to ensure that you make your decisions unencumbered by the inertia of habit, custom, law or prejudice—and it is up to you to create these situations. Freedom only exists in the moment of revolution. And those moments are not as rare as you think. Change, revolutionary change, is going on constantly and everywhere—and everyone plays a part in it, consciously or not.” CrimethInc, *Indulge and Undermine*, 2001)

In order to understand Anarchism as a political philosophy, it is crucial to see how intimately linked the theories are to the practice of building a new world based in anarchist principles. In essence, anarchism relies on a model of prefigurative politics and, as such, anarchists must live the world they strive for into being. The focus on learning through praxis is considered by most anarchists to be crucial in preventing hierarchical operations and for proper expression on anarchist theory. To understand anarchism is to engage with it experientially; to that end, this course requires a substantial praxis component.

To fulfil this assignment, it is expected that each student will fulfil the following elements:

**1] 24 hours** (on average, 2 per week for 12 weeks) **working in community** on concrete praxis with an anarchist group or a group operating under anarchist principles. The nature of this project means it may not always be the same work per week and it may take some time for you to get started. Parts of class time will be devoted to helping you identify an organization or group you could join. You should speak with the professors as you choose and contact groups.

**2] Weekly required reflections** (graded for completion) on the praxis component will help track the student's experiential learning and prepare an archeology of the individual impact of praxis on one's theory. There will be some weeks where these reflections have a prompt and some of free-write reflections. These reflections are individual, even if the praxis is conducted in a context that includes others from class. This is a good place to practice thinking about how these actions manifest theories or concepts articulated by anarchist theories we are reading in class.

**3] Produce a five-minute podcast** where you contextualize what you learned through praxis within the theoretical discourses read and discussed in class. The guidelines for this will be shared in a separate document.

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This component can be completed individually or in groups according to interest and capacity. Students should work with an existing group or formation in order to enable students to learn in community with accountability to the goals intended by their actions. If a student or group wants to design a project because there are no local groups working in their interest area, they must consult with the professors before moving forward in order to gain guidance in project design and to explain why it must be independent from existing work in the Boston area.

## 5. Capstone

Capstone counts for **50%** of the final grade. This grade includes preparatory work, a conference presentation, and the final research paper itself.

- A. Preparatory Capstone Work: 7%
- B. Capstone Presentation: 8%
- C. Final Capstone Paper: 35%

A note about grading: the steps in the writing process listed below are meant to encourage a dialogue between the student and professors. 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. We are more than happy to meet with you and hash out ideas at any stage of development.

### 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, we explain each stage of the writing process in detail.

The Capstone is scaffolded into 7 steps. 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

### Step 1: Select a topic (February 21)

Pick a topic that you want to spend the semester researching and writing about. Start with a general topic (e.g., philosophical anarchism or community defense); your goal will be to identify a specific issue/question (e.g., objections to contractarian defenses of political obligation or praxis applications and debates for alternatives to calling the police). It's okay not to know right away what problem you'll tackle.

We have created a Google Doc on [Anarchism | Bibliography and Resources](#) where you can start looking for ideas and adding your own.

In addition to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy's* article on "Anarchism," look through the supplementary reading list on Canvas.

### Step 2: Topic overview (February 28)

Demonstrate that you have a preliminary understanding of the *philosophical, theoretical, or theological 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).

### Step 3: Bibliography (March 13)

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 anarchist texts and philosophy or religious studies articles<sup>1</sup> (not economics, international relations, sociology, etc.), even though you're welcome—and invited—to use sources from other disciplines in your paper.

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<sup>1</sup> Some **philosophy and political theory 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*. Some religious studies journals: *History of Religion*; *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*; *Numen*; *Religious Studies Review*. Some academic journals devoted to anarchism: *Anarchist Studies: An inter- and multi-disciplinary journal of anarchism research* and *The Anarchist Studies Journal*.

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 “Emma Goldman argues...” After that, “Goldman argues...”

For citations: what matters first and foremost is consistency. For your Capstone final paper, we recommend you use either [Chicago style](#) or [Harvard style](#) of citations. You may also use a different citation style, such as APA. What matters is that you be consistent throughout. The [Online Writing Lab](#) (OWL) at Purdue University offers a wide variety of guides, including up-to-date resources on: MLA, APA, Chicago, and AMA.

Pick one now and use that style to start formatting the list references. Make sure to list the sources properly (for instance, don’t just link to the Canvas documents). Under each source:

- summarize the text’s main object and theses in a couple of sentences (don’t copy and paste the abstract);
- and explain how the piece is useful for your own purposes.

#### Step 4: Outline (March 20)

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 5: Lightning presentation (Wednesday, March 27, in class)

Each student will speak for 2 minutes 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 6: Conference draft due (April 3)

Submit the draft of your conference presentation, including PPT, notes (in word doc), and/or planned 1- or 2-page handout, should you have any.

At the top of your word doc, let us know what concerns you about the presentation and what kind of feedback on your draft you'd especially like us to give you.

## 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 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. Is there a section of your project that you'd particularly like to get feedback from the class—as a community who are likely to have an above average understanding of your project?
6. Conclude your presentation by summarizing your argument
7. 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 around 4,500-5,000 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, Times New Roman, 14-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. Keep in mind that both as a writer and a peer giving feedback, you are part of a community and good quality feedback and considered and substantial responses to feedback are part of honoring that community.

#### **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 the relevant philosophical and theoretical 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 or theoretical perspectives/issues you will be discussing. Your paper should make clear at the very beginning why this is philosophical or theoretical and not simply your opinion or felt sense.
- Draws 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.
- 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 or theoretical debate around the topic. Was the most important research on this issue covered? Were you primarily relying on secondary sources?

### 4. Discussion of Philosophical or Theoretical Literature

- What is the philosophical or theoretical issue at the heart of your paper? Explain the debate and what's at stake
- Which philosophers or theorists 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 or theoretical 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 or theoretical* 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
- formulate and respond to an objection to your position (see p. 25 for how to address objections)
- 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 or theoretical 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 in response to feedback and challenges.

## 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,” “Goldman 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>	a. Effectively introduces or concludes the paper b. Introduction: draws reader in and creates interest in topic c. conclusion: ties things together	a. Introduces/ concludes well but some important aspects are left out b. may not fully bring out the relevance of the topic c. May contain exaggerations or	a. Does not introduce the topic appropriately or convince the reader of why it is important or interesting b. Contains exaggerations or	Some major problem with this aspect of the paper

	<p>and makes clear the importance of the paper</p> <p>d. Contains no exaggeration or over generalizations</p> <p>e. should make clear what motivates the thesis</p>	<p>over-generalizations</p> <p>d. doesn't create as strong an impact as it could</p> <p>e. may not be as clear as is necessary</p>	<p>over generalizations</p> <p>c. Conclusion fails to tie paper together or make most important aspects clear</p>	
<p>Thesis</p> <p><b>10 Points</b></p>	<p>a. The thesis is stated clearly - no difficulty determining what is being said</p> <p>b. the thesis is insightful, deep, and interesting</p> <p>c. sentences leading up and following the thesis aid in understanding it</p>	<p>a. The reader is able to determine what the thesis is, but it is not clear or explicit</p> <p>b. The thesis is appropriate but not particularly deep, insightful or interesting</p> <p>c. It's possible to misinterpret or misunderstand the thesis</p>	<p>a. It's not clear that the paper has a thesis</p> <p>b. The thesis is not clear or appropriate</p> <p>c. Even a careful reader might have trouble determining what the thesis is</p>	<p>Some major problem with this aspect of the paper</p>
<p>Research and general discussion of topic</p> <p><b>20 Points</b></p>	<p>a. Demonstrates a broad understanding of the topic and includes relevant information needed to frame the topic (statistics, history, context, etc.)</p> <p>b. does not contain marginal information</p> <p>c. excellence level of research - all important ideas</p>	<p>a. Demonstrates a general understanding of the topic but relevant questions remain unaddressed;</p> <p>b. too much or not enough background</p>	<p>a. Does not provide a sufficient general discussion of the topic.</p> <p>b. Fails to provide some necessary background information.</p>	<p>Some major problem with this aspect of the paper</p>

	covered			
Discussion of philosophical or theoretical 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 or Theoretical Argument to support your thesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The argument given to defend the thesis is strong, clear and persuasive</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</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</li> </ul>	Some major problem with this aspect of

<b>25 Points</b>	b. Reasons and explanation are given to support each claim	irrelevant or unsupported premises	not clearly structured	the paper
<b>Writing 10 Points</b>	a. Clarity - every sentence is perfectly clear. b. Precision - the reader gets the impression that you have carefully thought about your writing and gone over several drafts c. Word choice - almost always exact d. Organization - well organized. Reader never wonders where the paper is going	a. Clarity - basically clear but a few awkward or unclear sentences b. Precision - generally the writing is careful but could be improved c. Word choice - basically good but sometimes inexact, ambiguous or awkward d. Organization - basically well organized	a. Clarity - the reader has to work hard to understand what you are trying to say b. Precision - writing seems sloppy, like it was written quickly 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;	Some major problem with this aspect of the paper

## Recap of Capstone assignment

	Task	Deadline	Grade weight
Preparatory Capstone Work	Step 1: Topic	Feb. 21	0.5%
	Step 2: Topic overview	Feb. 28	0.5%
	Step 3: Bibliography	Mar. 13	1%
	Step 4: Preliminary outline	Mar. 20	2%
	Step 5: Conference draft	Apr. 3	3%
Capstone presentation	Conference	April 10 and 17	8%
Capstone paper	Final submission	Apr. 23	35%

