

Capstone Courses for Fall 2020

Listed here are the seven COMM capstone courses that will be offered Fall 2020 and Spring 2021. This information is provided so you can start thinking about which options best fit with your career plans after graduation.

A link to the capstone application will be sent on February 10th, and the application will be available February 10th through the 21st. Please put some time and effort into constructing your capstone application so that it highlights your past experience and future goals. Students who do so most often are placed in their top choices. Be sure to submit your application no later than 11:59pm on February 21st!

If you have questions about individual capstone courses, you are welcome to contact the professors. If you have questions about the application process, please contact your advisor or Dr. Kopfman (Department Chair).

Good luck with your decision making!

- [**COMM 480, section 01**](#): Capstone in Communication: Audio Investigations (*Dr. Ryan M. Milner*)
- [**COMM 480, section 02**](#): Ritual Communication in the Mediatized World: The Construction and Practice of the Sacred Meanings (*Dr. Xi Cui*)
- [**COMM 480, section 03**](#): Capstone in Communication: The Leadership Labyrinth: An Exploration of Communication, Culture, and the Professional World (*Dr. Beth Goodier*)
- [**COMM 480, section 04**](#): Capstone in Communication: Narrative and Public Discourse (*Dr. Elena Strauman*)
- [**COMM 480, section 05**](#): Capstone in Communication: Explanatory Journalism - Covering the Current Political/Social Landscape the Way It Should Be Covered (*Dr. Laurie Lattimore-Volkman*)
- [**COMM 480, section 06**](#): Capstone in Communication: Strategic Communication Campaigns (*Dr. Amanda Ruth-McSwain*)
- [**COMM 480, section 07**](#): Capstone in Communication: Destination Italy! – Experiencing and Investigating Communication and Culture Abroad (*Dr. Celeste Lacroix*)

COMM 480, section 01: Capstone in Communication: Audio Investigations

Instructor: Dr. Ryan M. Milner

Course Meeting Time: T/TH 9:25 am – 10:40 am

This is a class about voice. Literally. You'll put a microphone in front of your face and speak into it and express yourself. This expression will take the form of narrative audio journalism; throughout the year, you'll produce your own personal podcast investigating something about the world that you think needs investigating.

But this is also a class about voice metaphorically. As you produce your podcast, you'll learn to share what matters and give others a platform to do the same. You'll learn journalistic inquiry, documenting truths and telling stories; you'll learn media production, crafting content and inspiring emotion; you'll learn qualitative research, deeply pondering and critically analyzing. Most important, you'll learn how to ask questions, find answers, and convey those answers as compellingly as possible.

The end result won't just be what you find, what you write, and what you record. The end result will be learning how to inquire. No matter what your investigations uncover, you'll leave the class with the tools you need to think, ask, analyze, and express. All that and a nice portfolio of your literal voice on record.

Admission Notes:

- Students will need access to a computer capable of running Adobe Creative Cloud software, most specifically Adobe Audition audio editing software. An external microphone is also required. While some CofC resources are available, personal hardware, software, and equipment may be more convenient.
- Students demonstrating a significant interest in or experience with journalistic inquiry, performative storytelling, or media production will be given special consideration for this capstone.

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COMM 480, section 02: Ritual Communication in the Mediatized World: The Construction and Practice of the Sacred Meanings

Instructor: Dr. Xi Cui

Course Meeting Time: M/W/F 11:00 am – 11:50 am

Ritual is not some archaic performance from the primitive world. On the contrary, it is one of the fundamental ways to communicate meanings in human society. With the introduction of every new technology of communication, rituals struggle, dissolve, morph, take shape, sediment, etc., but never cease to exist.

We may meet people through emails instead of in person, but we still say greetings. Fewer people may tune into the State of the Union addresses, but millions watch the Superbowl together. Not everybody worships a religious God, but sometimes they treat a celebrity like one. Why do we do these formalized things without instrumental purposes and what do they do for us and for our society? If you are interested in organizations, rituals sustain them. If you are interested in relationships, rituals perform them. If you are interested in communities, rituals define them. If you are interested in the media, rituals manifest in them.

So, in this course, we will first trace the idea of rituals in anthropology, sociology and, more importantly, communication and media studies. We'll identify the nature, the functions, the genres of rituals in face-to-face communication, in mass media, in social media, and in smart technologies. We will explicate the sacred meanings we are oriented toward through the rituals. Then we will “reverse-engineer” the construction of people’s ritualistic orientations in various contexts to set ourselves free, intellectually at least, from the arbitrary nature of meanings and the disciplining power of norms.

In the first semester of the year-long capstone course, we will learn about scholarly arguments around rituals as communication (they don’t always agree with each other), dissect examples, and create rituals of our own. (fun!) Then in the second semester, you will propose a research project to understand how the sacred meanings are communicated through rituals in various contexts of your choice. It could be a local organization, a media show/genre, a fan community online, or simply a person’s relationship with media technologies. The final artifacts you produce will include but not limited to scholarly reports.

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COMM 480, section 03: Capstone in Communication: The Leadership Labyrinth: An Exploration of Communication, Culture, and the Professional World

Instructor: Dr. Beth Goodier

Course Meeting Time: T/TH 10:50 am – 12:05 pm

Have you ever wondered what makes great leaders truly great? Do your friends tell you YOU are a great leader? Do your career plans involve leadership in some way? Are you wondering what to do with your life after college? Are you wondering how everything you have learned as a Communication major "fits together?" If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then this is the capstone for you!

Together, we will explore advanced leadership and communication theory and their relationship to organizational culture. I believe that leadership should be studied in a very personal way, applying concepts to your lived experience. We will review leadership literature, study great leaders, and prepare a personal leadership development plan to help you set and achieve your personal and professional goals for the next five years. We will also work on preparing resumes, practice interviewing and study effective techniques for networking and building your career. Students will learn how to showcase their work using an electronic portfolio or website as appropriate for their field. By the end of the first semester you will have a leadership action plan, a killer LinkedIn profile, and be able to knock your interviews out of the park!

You will also become an expert in some area of leadership theory by conducting primary and secondary research on an area of interest to you. Students in past sections of this course have studied topics like gender, humor, emotional labor, face work, leadership emergence in small groups, storytelling, organizational rites and rituals, images of leadership in literature and television, generational differences in leadership, and virtual teams.

Note: Students applying for this course should have an interest in leadership and organizational culture. Our class sessions are highly interactive and require a willingness to prepare and participate with enthusiasm. I enjoy working with students who are curious, collaborative, and have a strong respect for the relationship between theory and practice. If you rank this class, you must be willing to take a few risks and do the work necessary to better prepare yourself for life beyond COFC both personally and professionally. By the end of this course (and your major), I expect you to be able to demonstrate the department's goals of writing beautifully, speaking eloquently, thinking critically and researching effectively. If you are willing to put in the work, I will help you achieve all of these goals (and more).

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COMM 480, section 04: Capstone in Communication: Narrative and Public Discourse

Instructor: Dr. Elena Strauman

Course Meeting Time: T/TH 12:15 pm – 1:30 pm

"If you're going to have a story, have a big story, or none at all." --Joseph Campbell

What are the “big stories” that motivate us? How do our collective histories drive our beliefs? What stories engage us? Move us? Make us open our minds (or wallets)? Human beings structure their lives in and around narratives and those narratives provide “good reasons” for thought, feeling and action. This course will consider the broad place of narrative in our lives, particularly in terms of the stories that influence us in the public sphere.

This capstone experience will draw on theory and research on the place of narrative in the study of communication. While we will explore the social, political, and personal implications of stories in a variety of contexts, more specifically, we will consider the question, “What makes for a good story?” This question should be of interest to comm majors, as the ability to critique, revise, and tell good stories is fundamental to a variety of career paths.

COMM 480 will provide an overview of narrative theory and practice, examining the ways in which narratives are structured, popularized, and embedded in public imagination. The terrain of the course will include traditional (film, television, etc) and social media narratives, as well as historical narratives of people and places. We will consider the ways in which the lessons of narratives help us to build our own persuasive story. We will review the process and practice of critical, historical, and other qualitative methods for studying narrative. These methods will be applied in a series of individual research projects focusing on the role of the narrator, articulation of motive, means and mechanisms of memorializing, and the development of our concept of personal and public memory. COMM 481 will build on our common understandings of narrative theory/methods with students working in groups to propose and execute a research project focusing on a solid literature review, a clear articulation of method, good research practice and analysis and conclusions that highlight the significance of the project. A process of research, writing, and revision will be repeated throughout the semester culminating in a completed project suitable for presentation to a larger audience.

Success in this course will require attention and dedication to good research and writing practice. Students will be asked to engage, analyze and challenge ideas and topics that may be difficult, unfamiliar, unexpected, or uncomfortable. An open mind is necessary. Priority will be given to students who have a demonstrated interest in narrative and popular communication, as well as conducting critical or qualitative research. We will be working both in and out of the classroom for this course. Students may be asked to complete short ‘field trips’ which may require small activity/admission fees.

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COMM 480, section 05: Capstone in Communication: Explanatory Journalism - Covering the Current Political/Social Landscape the Way It Should Be Covered

Instructor: Dr. Laurie Lattimore-Volkman

Course Meeting Time: T/TH 10:50 am – 12:05 pm

Do you love talking about political, social and cultural issues but hate watching the news? Do you consider yourself a news junkie but are tired of listening to pundits yell at each other? Are you annoyed that lies can be perpetuated because journalists “report” what was said and not what is true?

Then be part of the journalistic solution. Explain the story that matters to you in a way that will matter to everyone. This kind of storytelling - explanatory journalism - is not new but is becoming more popular as news consumers long for reporting that gives analysis, explanation and context to current events. And this kind of storytelling can also be done in a variety of formats - from long-form print stories to Twitter threads to 10-minute videos or even infographics. What is essential is that the story be informative, interesting and useful because of in-depth reporting and then informed and expert interpretation of that information. The great thing about explanatory storytelling is that there are no bounds on the “story.” It can be something serious about controversial global politics, something critical about social injustice, something powerful in sports, or just something silly in pop culture. No matter the topic, anything that needs some context, often a little historical background and several examples to show how the issue has evolved to its current situation, is a prime candidate for explanatory journalism.

If you consider yourself a news junkie, you’re into debating political/social/cultural problems and solutions and you wish the news media did a better job covering the news in a way that engaged young Americans, this capstone may be for you!

The Project: The ultimate goal of this course will be to use explanatory storytelling to produce multiple pieces related to current events and issues that will be published online in various formats. A portion of the course will be devoted to studying the issues and the way to cover them with in-depth reporting strategies and effective writing techniques. Students must have a strong interest in the social, political and cultural issues facing Americans and how they intersect with our lives in many different arenas (such as political identity, sports, entertainment, travel) plus a desire to engage a student audience in those topics via relevant storytelling.

Admission Notes: Strong consideration to students with some experience in journalism and/or survival of Dr. Lattimore-Volkman’s COMM 310 classes. Note that the ability to multitask and meet deadlines - but not get overly stressed or frustrated over them - is a must for this capstone.

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COMM 480, section 06: Capstone in Communication: Strategic Communication Campaigns

Instructor: Dr. Amanda Ruth-McSwain

Course Meeting Time: W 2:00 pm – 4:45 pm

Students will engage in communication campaign development for a community partner, Charleston Wine + Food. Working as a student agency, teams will enact the strategic planning process to create a comprehensive campaign that meets the partner's communication needs. The capstone begins with intensive secondary and primary research. Based on the insights gleaned from the research phase, students will generate realistic goals and measurable objectives that will provide the foundation for campaign strategy and tactics. At the end of the first semester, students will prepare and present a formal pitch presentation for the partner. Following partner and instructor feedback, student teams will execute their campaign plan in the second semester, including evaluation of their campaign efforts. The final assignment for this capstone experience is a formal presentation of the campaign that includes results achieved and reflections on the work performed.

By the end of this capstone experience, students will have a significant portfolio of professional work including materials that demonstrate skills in strategic communications planning, public relations, media relations, digital communication, and organizational communication. Students will also gain exposure to large-scale event production. You can read more about the Charleston Wine + Food capstone experience at the links below:

<https://today.cofc.edu/2017/04/27/charleston-wine-food-cofc/>

<https://www.charlestoncitypaper.com/charleston/cofc-course-gives-seniors-real-world-experience-with-wine-food-festival/Content?oid=30145038>

Important Considerations: Students who apply for the Strategic Communication Campaigns capstone should be comfortable working in groups as well as interacting with community clients; professionalism is required at all times. The aforementioned personal characteristics will be important to demonstrate in the application process. In addition, students that have taken COMM 336: Strategic Communication Management, COMM 216: Principles and Practices of Strategic Communication and/or COMM 410: Social Media/Social Marketing will be given special consideration as will students that have completed internships in public relations, content marketing, integrated marketing communication or a related field. Finally, this capstone course requires a significant time commitment outside of classroom hours as well as initiative and time management skills, please consider your fall and spring semester workload before selecting this course experience. As a culminating experience to your program of study, this course should be one of the most rewarding - albeit most challenging - experiences of your college career.

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COMM 480, section 07: Capstone in Communication: Destination Italy!
– Experiencing and Investigating Communication and Culture Abroad
Instructor: Dr. Celeste Lacroix
Course Meeting: Abroad. Days and times TBA.

Have you reached your senior year and not had the opportunity to study abroad? Have you always wanted to, but there was never the right time? Or perhaps you've studied abroad, wished you could go again, but thought it wasn't possible? Have you dreamt of Italy – one of the most fascinating places on earth? A country with a history, geography, cuisine, arts scene, and politics uniquely its own...Or are you particularly passionate about *food and/or sustainability*? Now is your chance to choose to study abroad and apply for Capstone taught in the COMM semester abroad program in the "City of Dreams": Florence, Italy!

Study Abroad Capstone Program Overview:

This capstone experience begins with COMM 480, during fall semester study abroad in Florence, Italy. Students in the Capstone also will be registered for a typical semester load of courses in Italy (12 -15 hours chosen from COMM, and ENGL/Film Studies courses – see below for the full list of available classes).

In Florence, students will be immersed in Italian culture by living with other CofC students participating in our program in apartments in the heart of the city and through studying Italian culture and communicative practices with Dr. Lacroix, who has co-directed study abroad programs in Italy twelve times prior to Fall 2020. This course will have a special focus on food and issues of sustainability – specifically through the lens of the Slow Food movement – an international movement that was born in Italy and that works to promote food that is Good, Clean and Fair for all.

****Program Notes: You do not need Italian language background to participate in this program. We will provide some basic Italian vocabulary instruction before and upon arrival.*

As noted above, in addition to COMM 480, participants in this study abroad capstone experience will choose from other Communication, English/Film Studies courses, in order to be enrolled full time at the College (see further details below). In addition, 2 – 3 of the courses will likely count towards the Women's and Gender Studies major/minor.

COMM 480/481 – Course Overview:

In COMM 480, we will become culture learners by immersing ourselves in the Italian culture in an engaged and conscientious way. In this course, we will focus our

attention on the relationship between communication and culture. Over the course of the semester we will engage in field trips, guided experiential learning activities, as well as journaling, to reflect on what we are learning about both Italian culture and ourselves. As the semester progresses, we will form teams or design individual research projects, collecting both qualitative and quantitative data, primarily through ethnographic and survey methods. Data collection will take place in Italy before our return home to the U.S.

Spring semester back on campus in Charleston, in the COMM 481 course we will collect more data from sites in the city and will then focus on analyzing the data collected and the completion of research papers reporting our findings. In addition, we will work in teams to produce a social media campaign about our experiences abroad – we'll produce blogs, photo essays, podcasts, etc.

Other Important Information about the Destination Italy Capstone:

Cost: In addition to regular tuition, there is a program fee of \$6700, which includes housing in shared apartments for the 10.5 weeks we are in Florence, ground transportation and fees for all field trips (day and overnight), hotel accommodations and meals for a group trip to Turin – see this link for specific details:

<http://international.cofc.edu/study-abroad/cofcflorence.php>

Worried about affording this trip?

- This semester study abroad program is affordable for many students. Because this is a CofC faculty-led trip, for many students all financial aid in your Fall 2020 package applies to tuition and the program fee.
- Scholarships of up to \$2,000 from the Center for International Education are available to degree-seeking CofC students who study abroad for academic credit. Eligibility is based on demonstrated financial need and academic merit. For more information on the Center for International Education scholarship as well as additional scholarships for study abroad, please visit: <http://international.cofc.edu/study-abroad/scholarships.php>.

Courses Offered:

In addition to COMM 480 – Capstone in Communication, students will enroll in 3 – 4 *additional courses* (for a total of 12 to 15 credit hours).

- COMM 336 – Addressing Problems in Context: Representation, Identity and Culture (3 credits). *** (COMM 336 can be taken twice – the second time, hours go to general electives).
- COMM 410 – Analysis of Communication Practice: Media Criticism (4 credits).
- HIST 212 – Cinema: History and Criticism (3 credits). Taught by Dr. Colleen Glenn.

- HIST 390 – Special Topics: Studies in Film (3 credit hours). Taught by Dr. Colleen Glenn.

There are no prerequisites for the ENGL courses. Some of these courses also count for the WGST major or minor, and Humanities courses for General Education.

Some Program Highlights:

- Living in Florence, cradle of the Renaissance and in the heart of Tuscany
- Excursions to Slow Food producers in Florence and other popular cities in Tuscany, such as Siena and Lucca, as well as the Chianti region
- Classes taught by CofC professors and presentations by native Italians
- Opportunities for travel in Italy and Europe during long weekends and an extended Fall Break at the end of the program during Thanksgiving Week.

If you are interested in this unique Capstone experience, you should attend one of these 30 minute information sessions:

- **Thursday, February 6th 3:00 pm - 7 College Way #201 (conference room).**
- **Wednesday, February 12th 3:00 pm - 7 College Way #201 (conference room).**

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