

Capstone Courses for Fall 2021

Listed here are the eight COMM capstone courses that will be offered Fall 2021, and then continue into Spring 2022. 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 emailed, and the application will be available February 10th through the 26th. 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 are most often placed in their top choices. Be sure to submit your application no later than 11:59 pm on February 26th!

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 COMM advisor or Dr. Kopfman (Department Chair).

Good luck with your decision making!

- [COMM 480, section 01:](#)
Capstone in Communication: The Leadership Labyrinth: An Exploration of Communication, Culture, and the Professional World (*Dr. Beth Goodier*)
- [COMM 480, section 02:](#)
Capstone in Communication: Storytelling in the Digital Age (*Dr. Elena Strauman*)
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Capstone in Communication: In-depth Journalism: Telling Stories that Matter in a Way that Makes Sense (*Dr. Laurie Lattimore-Volkman*)
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Capstone in Communication: Ritual Communication in the Mediatized World: The Construction and Practice of the Sacred Meanings (*Dr. Xi Cui*)
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- [COMM 480, section 07:](#)
Capstone in Communication: Strategic Communication Campaigns (*Alyssa Maute Smith*)
- [COMM 480, section 09:](#)
Capstone in Communication: Destination Spain! – Experiencing and Investigating Communication and Culture Abroad (*Dr. Celeste Lacroix*)

COMM 480, section 01: 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

Format: In-person

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 02: Capstone in Communication: Storytelling in the Digital Age

Instructor: Dr. Elena Strauman

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

Format: Hybrid (both in-person and online)

"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 are the stories that engage us? That move us? That 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 particular interest to communication majors, as the ability to critique and tell good stories is fundamental to a variety of career paths. This is a course that blends theory and practice, asking students to consider the ways in which a solid understanding of narrative can inform both personal and professional life.

COMM 480 will provide an overview of narrative theory and practice, examining the ways in which narratives are structured, popularized, and embedded in public and personal 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. This course will focus on students’ ability to critique, revise, and build narratives strategically and effectively.

COMM 481 will build on our common understandings of narrative theory and methods with students working both individually and in groups to both build and revise narratives effectively and strategically for personal and public use. 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 projects focusing on a process of research, writing, and revision throughout the semester culminating in a completed project suitable for presentation to a larger audience and/or as a portfolio piece. Student interest, focus, talents, and plans for the future will dictate the form and substance of this final project.

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 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 03: Capstone in Communication: In-depth Journalism:
Telling Stories that Matter in a Way that Makes Sense**
Instructor: Dr. Laurie Lattimore-Volkmann
Course Meeting Time: T/TH 10:50 am – 12:05 pm
Format: In-person

Journalism is about telling stories. Important stories. Interesting stories. Sometimes entertaining, sometimes revealing, sometimes depressing, sometimes life-changing. The key is telling the truth and using real people to prove what the statistics and data show. But in today's politically divided world and often corrosive media, much of the fantastic storytelling journalists are known for has gotten lost in the barrage of talking heads, clickbait headlines and disinformation. So it is more crucial than ever to start telling the stories that matter to you in a way that will matter to everyone. Longform journalism that relies on in-depth reporting and compelling writing, presented in design-rich, multimedia formats is not just engaging but necessary. If we have realized anything in this pandemic era it's that truthful information via stories of strife and triumph is a powerful method for invoking change and improving the world around us.

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 was relevant, sincere and truthful, this capstone may be for you.

The Project: The ultimate goal of this capstone will be for students to learn in-depth reporting and writing techniques in a newsroom-like atmosphere. Students will participate in weekly editorial meetings to brainstorm ideas, discuss sources, hammer out important issues to be addressed in the stories and ultimately write or produce a story that begs the audience's attention. A portion of the course will be devoted to teaching best practices in reporting and journalistic writing as well as understanding current issues and how to cover them in a truthful but also engaging way. Students will be expected to produce at least one longform journalistic creation each semester based on gathering facts from a variety of credible sources, conducting multiple interviews, sifting through several layers of information to create a meaningful story that goes beyond just the headlines and basic facts.

Students must have a strong interest in the social, cultural and political issues facing the world, how they intersect with our lives in many different arenas, and finally a desire to engage a student audience in those topics via relevant and journalistic storytelling.

Admission Note: Strong consideration to students with some experience in journalism and/or survival of Dr. Lattimore-Volkmann'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 04: Capstone in Communication: Audio Investigations

Instructor: Dr. Ryan M. Milner

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

Format: In-person

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 (think RadioLab or This American Life); throughout the year, you'll produce your own audio documentary investigating something about the world that you think needs investigating.

But this is also a class about voice metaphorically. As you produce your documentary, you'll learn to share what matters and give others a platform to do the same. You'll learn journalistic inquiry, chronicling truths and telling stories; you'll learn media production, crafting content and inspiring emotion; you'll learn qualitative research, pondering deeply and analyzing critically. 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 05: Capstone in Communication: Ritual Communication in the Mediatized World: The Construction and Practice of the Sacred Meanings

Instructor: Dr. Xi Cui

Course Meeting Time: M/W/F 1:00 pm – 1:50 pm

Format: Online

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 06: Capstone in Communication: Bodies in the Digital Age

Instructor: Dr. David Parisi

Course Meeting Time: T/TH 1:40 pm – 2:55 pm

Format: In-person

“The body is our first and most natural instrument.”

-Marcel Mauss, “Techniques of the Body” (1934)

The rise of digital media technologies has transformed the configuration of traditional audiovisual media like print, radio, television, and film. These technologies have changed the way we relate to bodies—both our own bodies and the ones we connect to through digital communication networks. Particularly with the physical distancing practices adopted in response to COVID-19, we experience each other’s bodies mediated by digital technologies that selectively transmit sensations: while we may use Zoom to see and hear each other, this digital interface does not allow us reach through the screen to touch, feel, and hug our loved ones, feeding concerns that we’re suffering from a collective “skin hunger” due to this widespread deprivation of interpersonal contact.

It is through media that we learn to use and control our bodies: they provide vectors through which we perform and express our identities. GPS and geolocation services structure the way we move through and navigate space; fitness trackers nudge us to exercise more; photo-sharing apps shape clothes we wear and the food we eat; online dating apps allow us to make decisions about which bodies we connect physically with; and we interact with automated, gendered artificial intelligence programs like Siri and Alexa that don’t have physical bodies at all. While our bodies may seem like things that are naturally linked to our individual identities, these bodies are constantly being constructed and reshaped through digital technologies.

Accordingly, this capstone, explores this digital reshaping and reconstruction of the body, with an interest in understanding the past, present, and future of the mediated human body. We’ll examine topics such as the quantified self; haptics and digital touch; gender, sexuality, and computing; disability and digital media; the body in virtual and augmented reality; videogames and player bodies; the relationship between robot/nonhuman and human bodies; the social construction of race through digital media; and the new forms of bodily surveillance and monitoring enabled by computers. The first semester involves a survey of pertinent literature, along with class exercises intended to orient students to the thinking about bodies as digitally mediated. The second focuses on developing and executing original, group-based qualitative research projects.

To facilitate a critical, hands-on engagement with these topics, students will carry out original, group-based research projects, employing a mix of historical, textual, and ethnographic methods. Each project will produce a portfolio of materials that simultaneously showcase student acumen for research, media production, and critical thinking.

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COMM 480, section 07: Capstone in Communication: Strategic Communication Campaigns

Instructor: Alyssa Maute Smith

Course Meeting: T/TH 3:05 pm – 4:20 pm

Format: Hybrid (both in-person and online)

Students will engage in communication campaign development for a community partner, Charleston Wine + Food. Working as a student agency, student teams will enact the strategic planning process to create a comprehensive campaign that meets the partner's greatest communication needs. The capstone begins with intensive secondary and primary research including environmental scanning, organizational research, trend analysis, issues examination, industry exploration, and audience analysis. 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 throughout the second semester of study, including evaluation of their campaign efforts. The final assignment for this capstone experience is a formal presentation of the campaign that includes the 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 that 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 09: Capstone in Communication: Destination Spain! – Experiencing and Investigating Communication and Culture Abroad
Instructor: Dr. Celeste Lacroix
Course Meeting: Abroad; Days and Times TBA.
Format: In-person

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 and would love to go *again*, but thought it wasn't possible? Have you dreamt of Spain – one of the most fascinating places on earth? A country with a history, geography, cuisine, arts scene, politics and culture uniquely its own... Or are you particularly passionate about *food and/or sustainability*?

Now is your chance to study abroad by applying for this Capstone, taught as part of the COMM semester abroad program in the stunning Trujillo, Spain!

Study Abroad Capstone Program Overview:

“Culture is to human collectivity what personality is to the individual.”-Geert Hofstede

Throughout our lives, our identities are shaped in large part by the groups to which we belong. As Hofstede suggests in the statement above, human groups express their “personalities” through what we call culture. If you are fascinated by cultural differences or how people behave and express themselves as a consequence of group identities, then this capstone is for you, as we will investigate the relationship between communication and culture in order to be able to embark on individual field research projects, culminating in narrative ethnographic essays.

This immersive, high-impact learning experience begins with COMM 480, taught during fall semester study abroad in Trujillo, Spain.

- Students in this Capstone also will be registered for a full semester load of courses abroad (12 -15 hours selected from COMM, ENGL/WGST, SPAN courses; more details below).
- In Trujillo, students will be immersed in Spanish culture through living with a Spanish family, and through studying Spanish culture and communicative practices with Dr. Lacroix, who has co-directed study abroad programs in Trujillo eleven times prior to Fall 2021.
- This Capstone course is a designated Sustainability-related Course for the SLI, so will also have a special focus on food and issues of sustainability – in part through the lens of the Slow Food movement – an international movement that works to promote sustainable practices and food that is Good, Clean and Fair for all.

To get a glimpse of Trujillo, take a look at this photo essay from one of my previous programs on You Tube: [Trujillo Photo Essay](#)

You might also want to check out this video created by one of my Capstone students who took the course in Trujillo in Fall 2019: <https://youtu.be/xXhY6Uhdfrs>

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If you are interested in this unique Capstone experience, you should **plan to attend one of the following Zoom information sessions (join in any time during the hour):**

- *Thursday, February 11th 3:00 – 4:00 pm
<https://cofc.zoom.us/j/96359420767?pwd=dFlTM2xpay85YWZ0Z0NFWENxRzl6Zz09>
- *Friday, February 19th 12:00 – 1:00 pm
<https://cofc.zoom.us/j/98285011612?pwd=Rm84V0NQMXFH0pMaUs2Mkt0R0VuUT09>
- *Tuesday, February 23rd 4:00 – 5:00 pm
<https://cofc.zoom.us/j/91541731138?pwd=TndOaWJxNjktTjR0ejBkemJ0Y2ZTQT09>

COMM 480/481 – Course Overview:

In COMM 480, we will become culture learners by immersing ourselves in the Spanish 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 Spanish culture and ourselves. As the semester progresses, we will form teams or design individual research projects, collecting both qualitative data, primarily through ethnographic fieldwork. Data collection will take place in Spain before our return home to the U.S. in December. In Spring semester back on campus in Charleston, the COMM 481 course will focus on additional fieldwork, then 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, videos, etc.

Other Important Information about the Destination Spain Capstone:

Cost: In addition to regular tuition, there is a program fee of \$6700, which includes room and board, airfare to/from Spain, ground transportation, all field trips (day and overnight) – see this link for specific details: <http://international.cofc.edu/study-abroad/cofctrujillofall.php>

Worried about affording this trip?

- This semester study abroad program is affordable for many students. Because this is a CofC faculty-led trip, all financial aid you are awarded for Fall 2021 applies to tuition and the program fee. Since the program fee is virtually equivalent to what some students spend on room and board at the College, the cost for many students, is not much more than they spend on rent and food over the course of a typical semester here in Charleston.
- 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: <http://international.cofc.edu/study-abroad/scholarships.php>.

Other Courses To Be Offered:

As indicated above, 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). Several of the courses offered will also count for Women’s and Gender Studies.

- COMM 336 – Communication and Culture (3 credits). ***COMM 336 can be taken twice for credit (toward overall hours).
- COMM 410 – Media Criticism – Spanish Film in Focus (4 credits) ***Can also be taken twice for credit.

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- ENGL 350: Hemingway in Spain (3 credit hours)
- ENGL 364: Contemporary Latina Writers (3 credit hours)
- ENGL 366 or ENGL 339: Travel Writing (3 credit hours)
- SPAN 328 – Spanish Language Study Abroad (3 credits).

No prerequisites for the English courses. SPAN 202 is the prerequisite for SPAN 328.

Note: In Trujillo, Spanish is the sole language spoken by many of the residents. As such, it is preferable that students who choose this capstone have completed (or have the functional equivalent of) Spanish 202, though this is NOT a requirement. If you have not studied Spanish, but are still hoping to be selected for this Capstone, please contact Dr. Lacroix as soon as possible to discuss this.

Some Program Highlights:

- Living in an historic Spanish town, known for its palaces, castle and Plaza Mayor
- Planned excursions to Madrid, other amazing southern Spanish cities (Cordoba, Sevilla, Granada) and to Lisbon, Portugal
- Classes taught by CofC professors and native Spaniards
- Home stay with families to truly experience daily life as Spaniards do
- Opportunities for travel in Spain and Europe during a planned extended Fall Break and long weekends

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