Here are the eight COMM capstone courses we’ll offer during the 2023/2024 academic year. COMM capstones last two-semesters; each of these classes will begin with COMM 480 in Fall 2023 and conclude with COMM 481 in Spring 2024.

If you’re an eligible COMM major, you’ll be emailed an application inviting you to rank order your capstone choices and to explain why you’re a good match for your top choices. Before you apply, read through the course descriptions in this document and think about which capstones best fit your passions, skills, and plans after graduation.

The capstone application opens February 15 and closes at end of day March 03. After it closes, capstone professors will consult applications and each other to place students into capstones.

So put some time into completing your application! Your responses should highlight past experiences, current interests, and future goals. Students who craft their applications with care are more likely to be placed in their top choices. Students who don’t craft compelling answers may be asked to rewrite their application.

If you have questions about individual capstone courses, feel free to contact the professors offering them. We’re happy to clarify! If you have any general questions about the application process or your eligibility, contact your major advisor or COMM department chair, Dr. Ryan Milner.

Good luck as you take your first steps toward your senior year!

**Fall 2023/Spring 2024 COMM Capstones:**

- **Audio Investigations** (Dr. Ryan Milner)
- **The Leadership Labyrinth: Interrogating the Twists and Turns of Popular Leadership Advice** (Dr. Beth Goodier)
- **In-Depth Journalism: Telling Stories that Matter in a Way that Makes Sense** (Dr. Laurie Lattimore-Volkmann)
- **Activism and Social Justice: A Rhetorical Study of Resistance and Control** (Dr. Kelly Jakes)
- **Communication Competence...Is it Enough?** (Dr. Deb McGee)
- **The COMM Agency: Hybrid** (Dr. Amanda Ruth-McSwain)
- **The COMM Agency: Remote** (Dr. Amanda Ruth-McSwain)
- **Destination Spain! Experiencing and Investigating Communication and Culture Abroad** (Dr. Celeste Lacroix)
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 podcasts like RadioLab, This American Life, 30 for 30, or Serial). Throughout the year, you’ll plan, research, and produce your own audio documentary investigating something about the world that you think needs investigating.

Documentary topics can be anything connected in any way to human communication. Want to dive into dating app culture? Get on it. Want to explore tattoos as self-presentation? Have at it. Music, sports, marketing, wellness, identity, politics, justice, belief. No matter what you decide to investigate, this class will teach you the skills you need to investigate it. And to invite others to listen.

Because 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 result won’t just be what you find and what you record. The result will be learning how to inquire. No matter what your investigations uncover, you’ll leave the class with the tools you need to wonder, 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 Audition audio editing software. An external microphone is also suggested. 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.
Everywhere you look there is advice on how to be a “great leader.” Podcasts, books, documentaries, email blasts, even the daily news runs stories on how we can be better leaders. But how much of this “advice” really works? Do power naps really impact your performance? Does daily meditation REALLY make you a better leader? Is networking truly the key to your professional success? Do leaders who fail often actually outperform those who don’t take risks? Are people who collaborate more effective than those who compete? Does exercise actually improve performance? Does using humor change the way people perceive you as a leader?

In this Capstone we will read, watch and listen to popular advice given to leaders and compare that to the theoretical and academic perspectives that have long existed on the topic. Students will "test" this contemporary advice through a series of challenges and experiments over the year-long course and interview leaders in the industry about their experiences and advice to future leaders. We will use these challenges as a foundation for our primary research into topics related to leadership like mindfulness, productivity, emotional intelligence, gender, diversity, work-life balance, networking, virtual teams, leadership styles, face work, storytelling, failure, and more. You will share the results of your research as an article on LinkedIn, a TedTalk style presentation, or a Podcast at the end of the year depending on your professional goals.

In addition to our investigation into popular leadership advice, this course will help you connect what you have learned in your communication major to your future career plans. We will work together to prepare a personal leadership development plan, practice interviewing skills, 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 resume, and be able to knock your interviews out of the park!

**Admission Notes**

- Students applying for this course should have an interest in leadership and popular 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, be willing to “play” in the classroom, and do the work necessary to better prepare yourself for life beyond COFC both personally and professionally. In return, you will have a professor who LOVES teaching the Capstone course, cares about her students and creating a strong community in the classroom, and enjoys working with seniors as they prepare to launch their careers.
In-Depth Journalism: Telling Stories that Matter in a Way that Makes Sense

Instructor: Dr. Laurie Lattimore-Volkmann
Format: In-Person
Meeting Time: T/TH 12:15pm - 1:30pm

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 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.

Stories will be published online at cofcexplained.com as well as in the online version of Charleston’s City Paper. The best of the best will also be published in a special CofC insert each fall and spring.

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 Notes:
- Strong consideration to students with some experience in journalism and/or survival of Dr. Lattimore-Volkmann’s COMM 310 classes.
- The ability to multitask and meet weekly deadlines - but not get overly stressed or frustrated over them - is paramount for this capstone.
Activism and Social Justice: A Rhetorical Study of Resistance and Control

Instructor: Dr. Kelly Jakes
Format: In-Person
Meeting Time: T/TH 1:40pm - 2:55pm

Contemporary Americans are living at a crossroads. As lawmakers and citizens debate the status of reproductive rights, the issue of police brutality, the epidemic of gun violence, and more, public discourse is, quite literally, a matter of life and death. This class invites students to weigh in on the communication surrounding these social justice issues. We will look at the ways people use particular notions of race, gender, class, and nationalism to both challenge and protect the status quo.

As you work to analyze the discourse of resistance and control, you will also learn about the practice of rhetorical criticism, a method of communication research that is deeply concerned with ethics and moral judgment. You will learn, especially, about the construction of gender and race and how these seemingly “natural” identity categories operate to consolidate power and to marginalize certain groups.

You will also learn a lot about a social justice initiative of your choosing. Through independent research projects, you will analyze the arguments and messages embedded in the discourse of a particular activist movement. In the end, you will be conversant in the disciplinary vocabularies of contemporary rhetorical criticism and will have produced a critical work appropriate for conference or journal submission and/or graduate applications.

Admission Notes
- Students with interest in and aptitude for written communication will be given special consideration for this capstone.
Communication competence has been operationalized as communication that is effective at achieving one’s task, relational, and self-presentational goals in a way that is appropriate for a given context. However, communication competence does not necessarily mean communication excellence. This capstone explores the development of theories of communication competence as they relate to interpersonal communication contexts (e.g., conflict management) and public communication contexts in order to identify behaviors that are more and less communicatively competent in various contexts.

The first eight weeks of this two-semester capstone will be spent exploring and learning about communication competence. Then we will divide into five research teams to conduct five studies into some aspect of communication competence and what it takes to bring communication competence up to communication excellence. We will complete our proposals and IRB submissions during the Fall, and we will collect and analyze data during the Spring. Our goal is to have conference paper submissions at the end of our journey together. To that end, this capstone is especially appropriate for any student seeking to pursue graduate coursework.

**Admission Notes**

- In order to earn an ‘A’ in this capstone, you must be willing to serve as a Research Assistant/Group Leader/Liaison on the class Research Leadership Team (RLT). One of the goals of the RLT is to have at least one trained group facilitator in each group to help the group function productively and efficiently and to report on anyone who is not carrying his or her weight on group tasks. Becoming a member of the RLT will entail applying for the position by completing a short research paper on how to be an effective group leader and having an interview with me. The Research Leadership Team will meet over Zoom at least once every other week for instruction on group leadership, troubleshooting, and coordination of group activities. Most meetings of the RLT will occur, at least in part, during class time, but you may need to hold conferences with me outside of class time. Failure to meet expectations of the RLT, will result in your termination from the RLT, and your no longer being eligible for an ‘A.’

- It is possible for all students to begin the course on the RLT! And I would love it if you would, as that would mean that you all learned about being an effective group leader by doing the readings and research paper on group leadership!
Are you a steak knife or Swiss Army knife? Calling all versatile, resourceful, inventive, hard-working, and multi-faceted communicators [aka. Swiss Army Knives] to be part of the first-ever Department of Communication strategic communication agency. Work with our anchor client, Charleston Wine + Food, and a variety of other clients representing public and private brands. If you are up for a challenge and want to be part of a high-performing team that recognizes the honor and responsibility of client work, this is the capstone for you.

Students will engage in communication campaign development for a variety of clients. Working as one virtual agency [with on-site obligations for client work], student teams will enact the strategic planning process to create research-based, comprehensive campaign efforts that meets the client’s greatest communication needs. The capstone begins with intensive secondary and primary research including environmental scanning, organizational research, issues examination, and industry exploration. 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. Throughout both semesters, students will meet with clients to pitch ideas, share progress, and present results. Following partner and instructor feedback, student teams will execute communication tactics and evaluate their accomplishments. 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, social media/digital communication, integrated marketing communication and organizational communication.

Admission Notes
- Students that apply for The COMM Agency capstone should be comfortable working in both autonomous and team environments as well as interacting with clients through online platforms and in-person interactions; professionalism is required at all times. A portion of the grade for this capstone is based on peer and client performance evaluations. The aforementioned qualifications will be important to demonstrate through the application process.
- In addition, students that have completed, COMM 216: Principles and Practices of Strategic Communication, COMM 336: Addressing Problems in Context, Media Relations 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 capstone 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.
Are you a steak knife or Swiss Army knife? Calling all versatile, resourceful, inventive, hard-working, and multi-faceted communicators [aka. Swiss Army Knives] to be part of the first-ever Department of Communication strategic communication agency. Work with a variety of clients representing public and private brands while creating a bold and beautiful portfolio of work. If you are up for a challenge and want to be part of a high-performing team that recognizes the honor and responsibility of client work, this is the capstone for you.

Students will engage in communication campaign development for a variety of clients. Working as one virtual agency, student teams will enact the strategic planning process to create research-based, comprehensive campaign efforts that meet the client's greatest communication needs. The capstone begins with intensive secondary and primary research including environmental scanning, organizational research, issues examination, and industry exploration. 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. Throughout both semesters, students will meet with clients to pitch ideas, share progress, and present results. Following partner and instructor feedback, student teams will execute communication tactics and evaluate their accomplishments. 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, social media/digital communication, integrated marketing communication and organizational communication.

Admission Notes

- Important Considerations: Students that apply for The COMM Agency capstone should be comfortable working in both autonomous and team environments as well as interacting with clients through online platforms; professionalism is required at all times. A portion of the grade for this capstone is based on peer and client performance evaluations. The aforementioned qualifications will be important to demonstrate through the application process.

- In addition, students that have completed, COMM 216: Principles and Practices of Strategic Communication, COMM 336: Addressing Problems in Context, Media Relations 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 capstone 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.
Destination Spain! Experiencing and Investigating Communication and Culture Abroad

**Instructor:** Dr. Celeste Lacroix  
**Format:** Study Abroad Fall Semester, In-Person at CofC Spring Semester  
**Meeting Time:** TBD

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? Or are you particularly passionate about food, sustainability and/or culture? Have you dreamt of traveling to Spain - one of the most fascinating places on earth? A country with a history, geography, cuisine, arts scene, politics and culture uniquely its own...

Now is your chance to take Capstone in an incredible new culture with the COMM semester study abroad program in 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 2023.
- The program will also have a special focus on food, sustainability and travel. In fact, there will also be a Travel Writing course included in the class options.

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

**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 and also design research projects, collecting 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.

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 a previous Fall semester: [https://youtu.be/xXhY6Uhdfrs](https://youtu.be/xXhY6Uhdfrs)

**Other Important Information about the Destination Spain Capstone**

Cost: In addition to regular tuition, there is a program fee of $6700-$6900, which includes room and board, airfare to/from Spain, ground transportation, all field trips (day and overnight). It's a fantastic deal, since many just 1 month-long programs have a similar program fee!

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 2023 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](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** - Explorations in Cross-cultural Communication for Living Abroad (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.***
- **ENGL 350**: Hemingway in Spain (3 credit hours)
- **ENGL 364**: Contemporary Latina Writers (3 credit hours) ***Counts for WGS
- **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.

**Admission Notes**
- If you are interested in this unique Capstone experience, you should plan to contact Dr. Lacroix at [lacroixc@cofc.edu](mailto:lacroixc@cofc.edu) as soon as possible. You will also need to apply for the Trujillo study abroad program, which is separate application that can be found here: [https://cofc.via-trm.com/program_brochure/15021/](https://cofc.via-trm.com/program_brochure/15021/)
- 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.

Join us for the experience of a lifetime - Fall 2023 in Spain!!