Here are the nine COMM Capstone courses we’ll offer during the 2022/2023 academic year. COMM Capstones last two-semesters; each of these classes will begin with COMM 480 in Fall 2022 and conclude with COMM 481 in Spring 2023.

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 11 and closes at end of day February 25. 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.

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 2022/Spring 2023 COMM Capstones:**

- **Section 01:** Audio Investigations (Dr. Ryan Milner)
- **Section 02:** The Leadership Labyrinth: Interrogating the Twists and Turns of Popular Leadership Advice (Dr. Beth Goodier)
- **Section 03:** In-Depth Journalism—Telling Stories that Matter in a Way that Makes Sense (Dr. Laurie Lattimore-Volkmann)
- **Section 04:** Environmental Communication: Science, Sustainability, and the Environment. An Interdisciplinary Approach (Dr. Kathy DeHaan)
- **Section 05:** Bodies in the Digital Age (Dr. David Parisi)
- **Section 06:** Riding the Wave: Navigating the Changing Tides of the 21st Century Workplace (Dr. Amanda Ruth-McSwain)
- **Section 07:** Strategic Communication Campaigns (Prof. Alyssa Maute Smith)
- **Section 08:** Narrative, Identity, and Relationships (Dr. Jenna Abetz)
- **Section 09:** Destination Italy! – 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 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.
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!

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.

Instructor: Dr. Beth Goodier
Format: In-Person
Meeting Time: T/TH 10:50am -12:05pm
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.

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. Note that the ability to multitask and meet weekly deadlines - but not get overly stressed or frustrated over them - is paramount for this capstone.
Environmental Communication: Science, Sustainability, and the Environment – An Interdisciplinary Approach

Section: 04
Instructor: Dr. Kathy DeHaan
Format: In-Person
Meeting Time: T/TH 1:40pm - 2:55pm

Are you passionate about community food systems and public health or environmental justice and water contamination? Are you concerned about aquatic systems and coastal health or migration patterns and endangered species? Have you wondered about the connection between air quality and environmental racism or plastic exposure and endocrine disruption?

Yes? Then this capstone might be for you.

The need to effectively communicate science-based information to the public has always been consequential. Increasingly, environmental communication professionals are being asked to “advocate for a policy, raise awareness, change behavior, influence public opinion, collaborate to address conflicts, pass legislation, or challenge assumptions.”

This capstone experience prepares students for those demands and takes both theory-driven and research-based approaches to communicating environmental and sustainability issues.

Communicating about the environment begins by exploring peer-reviewed scientific research. Students will partner with faculty or students doing research related to environmental impacts to translate that science for the public sphere. We will also partner with local and national organizations to apply this theory and research.

We take a broad approach to environmental communication. Students will select topics for their year-long projects. Project portfolios will likely include: video explainers, short and long form essays, podcasts, blogs, and TED-style talks.

Students who have previously taken Communication 336: Communicating about the Environment and/or Communication 410: Science Writing will have priority in the selection process. Students who are self-motivated, curious, creative, and capable of collaborating with a variety of interest groups will be most successful.
The rise of digital technologies has unquestionably transformed the configuration of traditional audiovisual media like print, radio, television, and film. But these technologies have also changed how 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 the COVID-19 pandemic, we experience each other’s bodies mediated by digital technologies that selectively transmit images, sounds, and touches: we may use Zoom to see and hear each other, but this digital interface does not allow us reach through the screen to touch our loved ones.

In this capstone, we explore the digital reshaping and reconstruction of the body, with an interest in understanding the past, present, and future of the human body. We will 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.
The changing nature of the contemporary workplace is a topic that has motivated considerable interest and discussion across academic disciplines, organizations and the mainstream media. As we slide deeper into the 21st century, communication professionals must be prepared for a workplace that requires broader skillsets, embraces alternative workspaces, expects fluid work styles, and where assumptions of the past may no longer hold and the informed recognition of generational, gender, age and cultural differences is paramount. As a result, understanding how to effectively use your communication skills is important as you prepare for this next season of professional life.

Over the course of this two-semester capstone, we will dive into various areas of professional communication with special emphasis on navigating the pivotal moments shared as young professionals. We will examine a wide range of specific organizational examples and hear from communication executives on how to best prepare for and negotiate professional life in 2022-2023 and beyond. More specifically, through community as well as individual work, you will

- explore the competencies that support long-term professional success,
- apply communication theories, principles and practices to professional situations,
- enhance your ability to research, organize and deliver professional oral and written presentations,
- consider personal values and priorities while establishing a plan to utilize the knowledge and skills gained through the degree-seeking experience,
- establish and use decision-making and goal-setting skills to address professional development opportunities,
- develop basic business acumen that relates to your role as a professional communicator,
- learn about the changing organization [for-profit and not-for-profit] and how the communications function continues to evolve,
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for a variety of professional audiences and purposes,
- critically evaluate your own work and that of others for accuracy, clarity, style and correctness, and
- apply the tools and technologies appropriate for the communication context.

The knowledge gained in this capstone will provide a cornerstone for academic and professional success. You will walk away from this capstone experience with a professional portfolio of work, comfort in meeting the expectations of a competitive job search, an expanded network of professional contacts that exposes you to a variety of opportunities and experiences in the field of communication, confidence in your ability to thrive in a constantly changing and sometimes challenging work environment and the skills necessary to ride the waves of the 21st century workplace.

Admission Note:

- This capstone is not designed to meet the specific needs of a student planning to pursue an advanced degree [graduate school] following graduation from CofC.
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/


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.
What stories do you tell yourself about your life? We have conversations with ourselves about who we are, the decisions we make, and the things we do. The voices that tell these stories come from all kinds of places in our life: loved ones, parents, teachers, friends, and religious institutions. In so many ways, we are defined by the stories we tell ourselves. This capstone explores interpersonal theory and research which situates narrative as central to making sense of, constructing, and reflecting our relational lives.

We are all storytellers — all engaged, as the anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson puts it, in an “act of creation” of the “composition of our lives.” Our identities and experiences are constantly shifting, and storytelling is how we make sense of it. We tell stories to teach, to explain, to understand, to cope, to survive. Storytelling frames how we interpret our lived experiences, builds order and coherence out of chaos and despair, provides tools for resistance, and connects us in relational webs with others. There are dark, underexplored sides of narrative as well. Narratives can constrain our sense of self or be limited by wider cultural scripts that help to regulate behavior.

During this course, students will work with case studies, visual/video materials, and podcasts as they engage with narrative approaches to identity and relationships. By the end of this course, students will develop a strong understanding of how narratives influence their interpersonal lives and be able to apply this knowledge in personal and professional contexts. To facilitate personal engagement with course content, students will design and carry out their own research, employing a mix of qualitative methods. Each project will produce a portfolio of materials that simultaneously illustrate students’ creative and critical thinking skills.
Destination Italy! – Experiencing and Investigating Communication and Culture Abroad

Section: 09  
Instructor: Dr. Celeste Lacroix  
Format: Study Abroad  
Meeting Time: 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, Political Science and Women’s and Gender 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 2022. 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 and Political Science 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 $6900 (estimated), which includes housing in shared apartments for the 10-11 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: https://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 2022 package applies to tuition and the program fee.
- Scholarships of up to $2,500 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: https://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 215 – Communication, Identity and Community. Taught by Dr. Merissa Ferrara.
- COMM 315 – Ethics in Communication. Taught by Dr. Celeste Lacroix.
- COMM 336 – Addressing Problems in Context ***(COMM 336 can be taken twice – the second time, hours go to general electives). Taught by Dr. Merissa Ferrara.
- COMM 410 – Analysis of Communication Practice: Media Criticism (4 credits). ***(COMM 410 can be taken twice – the second time, hours go to general electives). Taught by Dr. Celeste Lacroix.
- POLI 350 – Comparative Gender Politics. Taught by Dr. Kendra Stewart.
- POLI 359 – The Politics of Food in the US and Italy. Taught by Dr. Kendra Stewart.

There are no prerequisites for the POLI 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.

Admission Notes:

- If you are interested in this unique Capstone experience, you should write to Dr. Lacroix (lacroixc@cofc.edu) immediately as seats are limited and the applications are already being accepted.
You will have to apply for the program in an application that is separate from the Capstone Application.