Spring 2019 – English 601: Capstone I
Wednesday 6:30-9:30 pm

Dr. David Swerdlow
dswerdlw@westminster.edu

Office: 304 Patterson Hall
Office hours: MWF 1-2 pm
or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION
English 601 is the first half of the two-course English Capstone. The capstone project should demonstrate English majors’ abilities to research deeply and carefully, develop ideas fully, write creatively, and communicate clearly a significant topic of literary study (see below for specific outcomes). By the end of ENG 601, each student will have chosen a specific topic, submitted a comprehensive proposal, and completed a significant segment of the project for evaluation.

The English Capstone experience is designed to move majors from more traditional classroom experiences to independent study. With this in mind, ENG 601 will combine full class meetings with opportunities for students to work independently, in small groups, and in conference with the instructor. Please follow the syllabus outline; any changes will be announced.

TEXTS
Elements of Style by William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White

COURSE OUTCOMES: Students will demonstrate
1. the ability to discuss literature, including engaging in an exchange of ideas, and offering and supporting insights
2. the capacity to sustain controlled, critical arguments that analyze and synthesize a number of related texts
3. an understanding of the craft of writing, including concision, diction, grammar, and syntax
4. the ability to produce creative writing that shows an awareness of language, freedom from cliché, and an understanding of genre, style, and topic
5. the ability to identify and use a range of sources, including in-depth, peer-reviewed journal articles and books, suitable to the scholarly conversation on a particular topic, to evaluate and integrate source material, and to document accurately
6. an understanding of the literary tradition, the historical and cultural contexts of literature, and critical methods of reading
7. the ability to give well-planned, engaging presentations

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADES
One of the most important parts of English 601 is learning to meet deadlines—a key to successful completion of your final project next fall. You will produce several written documents, including required drafts for class discussion, conferences to attend, and presentations to give. Please note the due dates in the syllabus. Any assignments turned in LATE will be penalized ONE LETTER
grade PER DAY. Any work filled with grammatical and technical errors cannot receive above a C. As in any English course, we report all instances of plagiarism to the Dean of the College. Your course grade will reflect your work on both the process and the product that constitute the capstone experience. Come to class prepared and ready to participate. Stay on top of your assignments. Your contributions are vital to the success of this class; therefore, the instructor will lower your grade one letter for each absence after your third. If you have an emergency situation, you should notify the instructor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model summary/analysis (outcomes 2, 3)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Descriptions (including inventory) (outcomes 1, 2, 3)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Narrative (outcomes 1-6)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Copy (outcomes 1-6)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Copy (outcomes 1-6)</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Plans</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CAPSTONE 1 ASSIGNMENTS

I. Reviewing Capstone Models
What is a capstone? One way to begin answering this question is to read what others have written. This assignment asks you to review one model, as follows:

Written Summary: Due January 30

Read one capstone project completed by recent seniors and write a summary. We will divide these among the group during the first day of class. Copies of these projects are filed on D2L. As you read, take notes that will help you write a one-page (ca. 250 words) summary of the project. In your summary, identify the topic, thesis, and argument of the analysis presented and comment on the creative dimension of the project. In a concluding paragraph, mention features of the project that you find most interesting; note the relationship of the topic to the writer; and comment on any shortcomings you find. (See next in “Class Discussion” for specifics on evaluation.) Bring a printed copy to class.

Class Discussion

Come to class ready to discuss the following (and whatever else you find worth noting):

• Introduction: What larger context is provided to help us understand the topic? What critical vantage point is established? What is the relationship between writer and topic?
• Argument: What is the major claim of the study—what assertion launches the discussion?
• Scope: How extensive is the ground being covered; how fully does the writer cover that ground? Pay careful attention to the research and sources used. Are they scholarly? How do you know? Is the research extensive and thorough, or does it seem thin to you?
2. Developing Your Topic

What shall you do? What shall you ever do? First, remember that capstone is a process and a product. The project in its final form will likely change shape and focus as you learn more about the material. At this stage, you need to identify some territories to explore. To this end, you need to complete an inventory of possible topics and ideas.

**Topic Inventory: Due January 15**

Take a sheet of paper and generate an “interest inventory” for your Capstone project. Make the following headings on your paper: Authors, Texts, Historical periods, Genres, Tropes, Themes, and Concepts. Now, under your headings, list as many items as you can think of. There should be at least 10 to 12 items under each list. When you are done, look over your lists and circle the items in which you have the most interest. A good way to get ideas for this is to look over papers you have written for courses and syllabi for courses you have taken.

**Topic Descriptions: Due February 6**

Explore and evaluate possible topics for your capstone that you generated as part of your “interest inventory.” Write two 200-word descriptions of possible topics. For each, describe a topic and indicate why it appeals to you, how it relates to other work you have done as an English major, and what you think you would learn by working on it for ten months. In addition to these two topic descriptions, list any further topics you think might be interesting (i.e. your interest inventory). We will discuss your ideas as a group. Your peers will help you refine your thinking. Bring a printed copy to class.

**Topic Narrative: Due February 20**

The topic narrative should be a four-page essay that explains the topic you wish to pursue and the texts and authors you will focus on. With as much specificity as possible, your essay must accomplish the following tasks:

- Give a description of your envisioned topic by focusing on ONE primary text and author. You can also refer to other texts and authors you might consider that explore similar ideas.
- Describe how the preliminary research you have done convinces you that yours is a viable project. Your preliminary research should be done at least in part by searching the MLA database through the library. (MLA is THE primary database for peer-reviewed articles and books in literary studies.) What is the conversation out there? How will you join it? You will be bringing in further research developed during the library sessions.
- Discuss some of the questions that will fuel your research.
• Describe some possibilities for the creative component of your project and discuss its relationship to the critical component.
• Identify what you will need to do to get going on your project. What is the first thing you will do? And then what? What items are already on your reading list for this topic?
• Bring a printed copy to class. We will discuss your narratives in class as a group.

3. Writing Your Project

As with any English course, you have material to read and a paper to write. The difference in Capstone is that you choose the material and design the assignment. You will be reading and writing throughout the semester, and you will go public with two installments of your work.

First Copy: Due March 27

Provide 8-10 pages of writing that develop selected components of your project to date. Although it is but a draft of a draft, strive to make it polished and as complete as possible. Your writing must include the following:

• An introduction that provides contexts for understanding your topic and that sets up your approach to the topic. Conclude with a tentative claim about the topic—i.e., a preliminary thesis that launches the discussion to follow. You should include brief examples of the texts and authors you will examine as part of the overall project in order to ground your introduction in specifics rather than generalizations (1-2 pages).
• A summary analysis of relevant research. (2 pages).
• A developed segment of the larger work you envision. Examine a primary text you have chosen, providing a preliminary analysis that develops your thesis. Also refer briefly to several other texts that you will discuss as part of the overall project (6-8 pages).
• A brief outline of the whole work.
• In addition to the above, provide a working bibliography that includes all relevant material to date. For all the above, the MLA police will be out in force.
  Bring a printed copy of your “first copy” to class.

Final Copy: Due April 26

Turn in a final copy of your project to date. This copy should be 15-20 pages long and must include the following:

• A title and an outline.
• A revised and developed introduction (see above).
• An expanded segment of the larger work. Material submitted for the first copy should show signs of revision. New material may continue discussion already submitted or may examine another segment of the larger project.
• Integrated research. This copy should demonstrate that you have researched your topic and can situate your own writing within a larger, researched context.
• A list of works cited and a separate list of works considered. After each properly documented item, include a few sentences explaining what the source offers and how you might use it.
Remember those MLA police. **Bring a printed copy of your “final copy” to class.**

### 4. Growing Your Project

So that you will be best positioned to complete your project by the end of the fall semester, you will need to make some progress this summer. By the end of the current semester, you will have completed nearly all of your research and will have written a sizeable portion of your project. Summer will give you the time you need to build on your good work thus far.

**Summer Plans: Due May 1st**

You should end ENG 601 with a short write-up on what you will work on this summer. Give yourself 2-3 well-defined tasks for making progress. Indicate what readings you will attempt and what kinds of writing you might do, including plans for the creative component of your capstone. You should set modest goals—but not too modest! **Write 1-2 pages and bring a printed copy to class.**

**Fall Harvest**

When you return in the fall, you will hand in, during the first week of classes, the fruits of your summer labor. Although you do not have to finish everything you said you would do—and may end up writing something you had not anticipated—you should have significant (5-10 pages) new material for us to evaluate. Include

- further analytical writing and an initial portion of creative material
- a revised outline of the capstone and, if you wish, a summary of additional sources read.

We will evaluate this assignment as part of the final grade for the project in English 602 (probably 10% of the total grade).

---

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS & ASSIGNMENTS**

*(NOTE: Syllabus is subject to changes, swaps, drops and additions.)*

| Jan 15: | Due: Topic Inventory |
| Jan 16: | Introduction to Advanced Study |
| Jan 23: | No Evening Class: Scheduled Individual Conferences and Group Meetings |
| Jan 30: | Class Discussion on Sample Capstones |
| **Due:** Written Summary of Sample Capstone |
| Feb 6: | Meet in Library |
| **Due:** Topic Descriptions |
| Feb 13: | No Evening Class |
| | Scheduled Individual Conferences and Group Meetings |
Feb 20: **Due: Topic Narratives**—Presentations
Feb 27: Discussion of *Elements of Style*

In your reading of the text, give special attention to pages 15-33 and pages 66-86. Familiarize yourself with the rest of the text.

Mar 6: Ilya Kaminsky!!

**Spring Break**

Mar 20: Seniors Visit Class
Mar 27: **Due: First Copy**
Apr 3: No Evening Class

Conferences

April 10: No Evening Class

Conferences

April 17: TBD
April 24: URAC

April 26: **Due: Final Copy**

May 1: **Due: Summer Plans**