

The Story of My Major Capstone Guidelines

Description of Project

Stories are vital to being human. As Margaret Atwood puts it, “Storytelling is not a luxury to humanity; it’s almost as necessary as bread.” And for the English major, it may be as necessary as breathing.

For your Capstone, then, we’re asking that you write *your* story of being an English major—how you got there, what you experienced and discovered, and how it changed you.

How does it work? Sometime between the spring of your junior and senior years, you will choose a 4000-level course that has been designated by the department as “Capstone Eligible”) (this means that the course has five seats available for Capstone students and has been approved for WI credit). The course can be in creative writing, literature, film/media studies, rhetoric, or linguistics. Choose the course that best aligns with your focus as a major in consultation with the English dept. advisor, Mary Moore, who will issue you a permission number to sign up. You will complete all the requirements for the course, but as a Capstone student, you will also be writing “The Story of Your Major” and submitting it for a letter grade at semester’s end.

What elements should I include in my story? The content is also up to you, but you might begin by narrating how and why you decided to declare a major in English. You could also recount the obstacles and challenges you faced along the way. Was there an event or discovery that most shaped you—that enriched or deepened your sense of identity as an English major? If so, you should include that in your story. What have been the most valuable skills you’ve learned? What has been the most interesting knowledge you’ve gained? You need not address all these questions, and you certainly don’t need to answer them in any order, but however and whatever you choose, make sure you convey the singular, specific truth of *your* story.

What will my story look like? It can be written as a personal essay, but depending on your background and interests, and the preference of your particular instructor, you may be able to craft your story using different media, perhaps as a short film or podcast or even a graphic novel. You may find that in telling your story, you want to emphasize research on a topic of special importance to you, such as Black female novelists or your family’s history. A research paper is a kind of story too, one that begins with a problem in knowledge and details the steps you’ve taken to solve it, so you absolutely could write a research paper if you’re so inclined—provided you interweave some personal reflections on its meaning/value to you as an English major. Or maybe you’re a fiction writer—and would like to demonstrate your skills by casting yourself in a fictional/autobiographical story. It’s up to you *and* your professor to determine the nature and form of your project. It must adhere, however, to certain departmental and WI requirements:

- It must be 12-15 pg., double spaced (3000-3750 words); note: if you do a Podcast or film, you need to write a script of that length

- It must undergo three formal revisions (submitted for peer review in Weeks 4, 7, and 11 of the semester)

Assignments/Timeline/Revisions/Deadlines

Description of Draft One.

Draft One is 5 pg., double spaced. It is an exercise in generative writing, one in which you'll explore possible ideas and approaches for your capstone project. You will submit the draft to your capstone peers during Week Three of the course so that they can read, comment on, and discuss it in Peer Review Session #1 (Week Four). Based on the feedback you receive during this session, you will meet with your faculty member the following week (Week Five) to identify the topic, approach, and possible organization of your capstone project. Please note: you do NOT need to submit a draft to the faculty member at this time.

Description of Draft Two.

Draft Two is 8-10 pg., double spaced. This assignment is a "get-it-down" exercise, one in which you draft the various components of your project and get them into some kind of organization/shape. You will submit this draft to your capstone peers for their critique and feedback during Week Six of the course so that they can read, comment on, and discuss it in Peer Review Session #2 (Week Seven). Based on the feedback you receive during this session, you will meet with your faculty member the following week (Week Eight) to discuss the organization, structure, and approach of your capstone project. Please note: you do NOT need to submit a draft to the faculty member at this time.

Description of Draft Three.

Draft Three is 12-15 pg., double spaced. This assignment is a close-to-final draft of your project, one in which the writing is clear, the organization is sound, and the ideas/topics that you want to explore are all included. You will submit this draft to your capstone peers for their critique and feedback during week 10 of the course so that they can read, comment on, and discuss it in Peer Review Session #3 (Week Eleven). Based on the feedback you receive during this session, you will revise the draft and submit it to your faculty member during Week 12. The following week (Week 13), you will meet with your professor to discuss and finalize the project.

Final Draft

You will submit your final draft (12-15 pg., double spaced) to your faculty member on a date that the two of you agree upon.

What will we do with these stories?

Each year, the department will publish the best five projects online and through MU's self-publishing system. As you write, imagine that you are contributing to a collection of personal stories about being an English major. Your potential readers are incoming English majors, current majors, English faculty and alumni, your friends and family.