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What is a Capstone?

The Honors Senior Capstone is the culmination of your undergraduate Honors work. It is a major scholarly project that builds on your knowledge and interest in a field of study and allows you to work closely with a professor (your Capstone advisor.)

Does my Capstone have to be a research paper?

No. Although many people choose to write a research paper for their Capstone, some prefer to write a novel or a collection of short stories, develop a website, prepare a performance, curate an exhibit, direct a theatre production, or conduct a public relations campaign. Provided that you are working under faculty supervision, there are many different ways that you can complete your Capstone requirement.

Can I look at examples of Capstones from previous years?

Absolutely – and we encourage you to do this in order to see how other students have approached their Capstone projects. Examples of completed Capstones are available in the University Honors Office and on-line at www.american.edu/honors (click on the link to “Honors Activities” and then on the link to “Capstone Conference” to find samples of the 2007 Capstone winners.). All Honors Senior Capstone projects are also kept in the University Archives, on the third floor of Bender Library.

Does my school or department have particular requirements for my Capstone?

Depending on your major or school, there will be different requirements for your Capstone. Some schools or departments require you to do a 6 credit Honors Capstone project; other schools require 3 credit hours. Additionally, departments and schools have specific courses that you need to take to complete your Capstone work. Information on Capstone requirements is available on the Honors web site at www.american.edu/honors (click on the link to “Honors Requirements” and then on the link to “Honors Requirements for Different Majors”).

Do I have to sign up for a particular course to do my Capstone?

Again, that depends on your major. Capstone courses can vary from a department senior seminar class to an independent study to an upper level class supplement. To find out the requirements for your major, take a look at the Capstone requirements listed on the Honors web site at www.american.edu/honors (click on the link to “Honors Requirements” and then on the link to “Honors Requirements for Different Majors”).

Does my Capstone have to be on a topic related to my major?

That depends. If you want to graduate with Honors in your major then you need to do a Capstone related to your major. Alternatively, you can do a 3 or more credit hour Capstone in an area that is not related to your major and graduate with General University Honors.

Can I do a Capstone in a double major?

Yes – provided you are able to fill the Honors requirements for both of your majors. Contact a member of the Honors staff to talk about what you need to do to graduate with Honors in two majors.

How do I find a topic for my Capstone?

- Think about some of the classes you have taken that really interested you. What questions or ideas grabbed your attention? Could you turn these questions or ideas into a Capstone?
- What are you passionate about? How could you turn your interests into a Capstone?
- Look at examples of Capstones.
- Keep a notebook and write down your ideas.
- Look through journals, magazines, or newspapers related to your area of interest.
- Talk to your professors!
- Think strategically. Your Capstone is a great talking point on your resume or at a job interview – ask yourself how can you tailor your Capstone to your future career interests.



How do I pick my Capstone advisor?

First, you need to decide if you want to graduate with Honors in your major or General University Honors. If you are planning to graduate with Honors in your major, then you need to find a faculty member within your department or school. If you plan to graduate with General University Honors, then you need to find a faculty member who works in an area related to your proposed Capstone project. It's always helpful to find a professor with whom you have worked before because you will need to work closely with your Capstone advisor.

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What do I do if I can't think of anyone to be my Capstone advisor?

If you are not able to approach any of your former professors or if you are planning a Capstone in an area different than what you have studied before, then you should begin looking at faculty information on department websites – look for professors whose areas of interest match yours, then go and introduce yourself! Be prepared to talk with a prospective Capstone advisor about your ideas and get their feedback. Your academic advisor may also be able to recommend faculty members with whom you could speak. Feel free to come by the Honors office should you need more guidance.

Can I have more than one Capstone advisor?

Yes. You can have up to three Capstone advisors. This is an especially useful option if you are planning a Capstone that spans two or more disciplines. However, in this situation, only one Capstone advisor has grading authority.



Does my Capstone advisor have to be an AU faculty member?

Yes.

How long does my Capstone have to be?

Remember that your Capstone is a substantial scholarly project and the length of your final paper should reflect this! Capstones can vary in length from 40 pages to 80 pages, depending on whether you do your Capstone for 3 credits hours or 6. Page length is also something that you should discuss with your Capstone advisor and/or your Honors Coordinator at the beginning of your project.

Do I have to fill out any paper work to register for my Capstone?

Yes. Every student who is beginning a Capstone needs to fill out an Honors Capstone Form available from the Honors Office or on-line at www.american.edu/honors (click on the link “Honors Requirements” and then on the link “Honors Forms”). In addition to filling in your information, you need to have the form signed by your Capstone advisor and by the relevant department Honors coordinator. You should also attach your Capstone proposal or abstract and a work plan. The form should then be returned to the Honors office. The deadline to submit your Capstone form for Capstones begun in fall 2007 is September 24, and the deadline for Capstones begun in Spring 2008 is February 11. Remember, if you're completing an Independent Study for your Capstone, you will need to fill out the Registrar's Independent Study form which can be found at www.american.edu/registrar under “Forms”.

What is an Honors Coordinator?

Each department has an Honors Coordinator. The Honors Coordinator is a faculty liaison between his or her department and the Honors office. Regardless if you're completing a Capstone for 'General' University Honors or for University Honors in your Major, each Capstone form needs to have the signature of the appropriate department Honors Coordinator, in addition to your Capstone advisor, before being handed in to the Honors office. Coordinators are listed on the Honors web site at www.american.edu/honors (click on the link to “Honors Requirements” and then on the link to “Honors Requirements for Different Majors”). You should acquire the approval of the Honors Coordinator from the same department as your Capstone advisor. For example, if you are completing your Capstone with a professor from Literature, you would need to get the approval of the Honors Coordinator for Literature.

What is the Annual Honors Capstone Conference?

Every spring semester the Honors Program hosts a conference featuring some of the most outstanding Capstone projects. All Honors students are invited to submit their Capstone projects for inclusion in the Capstone Conference. A panel of judges awards 6 students as Capstone Conference award winners. The awards are presented to the students at the Honors Convocation.

Do I need to give copies of my Capstone to the Honors office when I have finished?

Yes, please. We require two hard copies of your Capstone and one electronic copy. If your Capstone is not a research paper then hand in a video or a selection of your work in a binder so that we have a record of your project.



What if I still have questions?

Don't hesitate to call or come by the Honors office to talk to an Honors counselor if you still have questions about the Capstone process or get stuck along the way. You can e-mail us at honors@american.edu or call us at 202.885.6194.