

The History Capstone Handbook

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1. General Information

1.1. Description



In masonry, the “capstone” is the stone that sits on top of, or “caps” an arch, wall, or other structure, giving it a polished appearance while demonstrating the strength of the underlying structure. Similarly, the senior Capstone project is intended to “cap off” your undergraduate education with a polished piece of original research that demonstrates your mastery of particular skills and knowledge—in this case, historical reasoning on a subject of your choosing.

The Capstone project is a year-long undertaking with less structure than a traditional course. It is certainly not the easiest way to complete your degree, and it may not be the most logical option for you, depending on your interests and your post-graduation plans. You should not consider it to be the default pathway to finishing your degree. One of the best reasons to undertake a Capstone project is if you enjoy doing historical research (which you will have sampled in Hands-On History and the research seminars you have completed) and want an opportunity to carry out a long-term research project. For such students, the Capstone year provides time and guidance that is unparalleled by any course or other opportunity at the undergraduate level. However, if you wish to graduate with distinction—an honorable goal—but you don’t particularly enjoy doing independent research, you may want to skip the Capstone and focus on GPA honors instead!

Normally, the Capstone sequence begins in the Fall with Capstone I and ends in the Spring with Capstone II. It culminates with a formal defense and a final evaluation by two readers. Students work with a primary advisor and, to a lesser extent, a secondary advisor. The format and length of projects is flexible, within certain limits. This handbook explains each aspect of the Capstone experience so that you can plan ahead and know what to expect.

1.2. History Capstone Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete a Capstone project will be able to:

1. Demonstrate historical reasoning abilities using evidence from primary and secondary sources.
2. Communicate effectively by employing precise and compelling rhetoric and a logical argumentative structure.
3. Produce an original work of historical analysis that makes use of under-utilized sources to intervene in the current state of knowledge in a particular field of history.

(MLO = Major Learning Outcome)

Mapping of Capstone Learning Outcomes to Major Learning Outcomes:

CLO	MLO1	MLO2	MLO3	MLO4	MLO5
1	X	X			
2			X		
3				X	X

1.3. Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible to apply for the capstone in Literature, you must meet the following criteria:

- Major GPA: 3.2
- All 100-level major requirements must be complete by the beginning of Capstone I
- No outstanding Incompletes at the time of application.

Capstone applicants will be assessed by the major faculty based on the eligibility criteria and the quality of the proposal.

NOTE: *Successful capstone applicants must maintain a 3.2 GPA throughout their senior year to be able to earn an Honors for the capstone. Failure to maintain the required GPA will result in the capstone being capped at Pass.*

1.4. Allocation of Advisor

Successful applicants will be matched to their first choice of primary and secondary advisor where possible. If the student's first or second preference cannot be accommodated due to the necessity of maintaining a fair distribution of faculty workload, the major capstone coordinator will consult with the student to determine an appropriate solution.

1.5. The Advising Process

If your Capstone proposal is approved, you will be assigned two advisors: a primary advisor and a secondary advisor. Your **primary advisor** must be a member of the FUV History faculty, but your **secondary advisor** may be external (that is, from another major program or another institution). Per university policy, external secondary advisor may not receive any compensation for their role in Capstone advising and evaluation, even if you are able to provide it.

You will indicate your preferred advisors on the Capstone Proposal Form, but the History faculty will ultimately assign an advising team based on your preferences and other considerations. You will work most closely with your primary advisor throughout your senior year, but you are encouraged to consult your secondary advisor with specific questions.

1.5A. The Role of the Primary Advisor

Your primary advisor will work with you most closely and should

- Meet with you regularly (at least twice per month) to discuss your progress and address any problems you are facing.
- Read early drafts of your work and provide constructive feedback.
- Arrange your final defense.
- Obtain signatures on the paperwork needed to file your final project

1.5B. The Role of the Secondary Advisor

Your secondary advisor may or may not play a large role in advising. At the very minimum, your secondary advisor should

- Communicate their expectations of your project toward the beginning of the year.
- Attend your defense and provide constructive feedback at the defense.
- Serve as a second reader and evaluator for your final project.

Tip: Your primary advisor may not be an expert on your chosen subject and almost certainly isn't an expert on the narrow historical problem you will tackle in your Capstone project—and that is okay! The main role of your Capstone advisor is to guide you through the research process and to evaluate your mastery of that process, regardless of the topic. If you feel that you need expert guidance on a particular topic and that no one on our faculty has specialized knowledge on that topic, you may want to consider requesting an external secondary advisor who does. Another way to approach this is to propose a Capstone project based on a 300-level research seminar that you have taken at Fulbright, or to ask the faculty for topic suggestions—that way, you are more likely to end up with a primary advisor who is also a subject-matter expert!

1.6. Project Format

There is **no specific format requirement** for the History Capstone project. Most students choose to write a traditional thesis (as of Fall 2024, *all* the History Capstone projects have adopted this format), but students are free to adopt other formats as well. Suggested alternative formats may include:

- a short documentary film,
- a podcast,
- a historical exhibition, or
- an interactive digital narrative.

Students who expect to apply to postgraduate schools or enter writing-intensive careers after graduation may benefit most from the experience of authoring a written thesis based on archival materials or other primary sources (including oral history interviews), which they can furnish as a writing sample or use as the basis for a graduate thesis. But students who wish to pursue other careers may find that an alternative format is the best option: for example, a

student wishing to pursue journalism may want to complete their project in the form of a film or podcast. In general, although there can be exceptions, both thesis and non-thesis Capstones should 'work up' sources that do not figure extensively in existing scholarship, rather than taking the form of a literature review or commentary on existing secondary sources. This is something to discuss with a potential advisor.

Guidelines for the Capstone by Thesis are included in Section 3 of this handbook. If students propose a project in an alternative format, the History faculty will confer and establish guidelines for the new format.

1.7. Group projects

Group project proposals will **not** be considered. The Capstone is intended as an individual undertaking and will be evaluated as such. There are other opportunities for group research.

1.8. Capstone I

In Capstone I, you will actively conduct research and refine your project proposal and plan. You will focus on gathering and organizing your information or other materials needed to realize your project. In some cases, students may begin the very initial stages of production (subject to your advisors' approval).

Capstone I will be assessed by a combination of your active participation in the advising processes and end-of-term submission. The end-of-term submission will demonstrate successful progress towards the final Capstone submission, and satisfactory completion.

Capstone I expectations:

At the beginning of the semester, you should:

- Meet with your advisor as early as possible.
- Set a regular meeting schedule with your advisor.
- Consult your advisor on the specific deliverables they expect to receive at the end of Capstone I.

At the end of the Capstone I semester you should submit the following materials, unless your primary advisor specifies otherwise:

- A literature review or annotated bibliography of at least five pages (2,000 words);
- An introduction (if you are writing a thesis);
- Or other materials/documents to be decided on in consultation with your advisors (e.g. questionnaires).

1.9. Capstone II

In Capstone II, you will focus mainly on production, whether it be writing your thesis or realizing a creative project. You might continue to do some research or information gathering, but this should taper off early in the semester so that you can focus on producing and editing your final submission.

At the end of Capstone II, you will be required to participate in a formal Capstone defense in which you present your work and discuss its strengths and weaknesses with your primary and secondary advisors. Capstone II will be assessed entirely on your completed thesis (or final submission in another format), according to the rubric that is provided at the start of the year.

In order to ensure that you have enough time for the defense, revisions, and final submission of your project at the end of Capstone II, it is essential that you agree on a timeline with your primary and secondary advisor toward the beginning of the Capstone II semester. Please see section 1.12 for guidance on how to schedule these important components.

1.10. IRB Approval

If your project requires oral history interviewing or other research involving live human subjects, you will be responsible for obtaining approval from Fulbright University Vietnam's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB approval process involves taking an online module to learn about IRB procedures, as well as submitting an application detailing your research design and plan for data protection.

Students must obtain IRB approval **before** the period of their Fulbright-affiliated research. Failure to do so may result in delays to the project and/or its suspension. For this reason, we advise students to begin their IRB application as soon as their Capstone application is accepted, or during Capstone I (preferably week 3) at the latest. In any case, students should have their questionnaire ready and approved at the end of Capstone I.

More information on the IRB approval process can be found at <https://fulbright.edu.vn/irb/>

1.11. Academic Integrity

The capstone is subject to the regulations described in Fulbright University Vietnam's Code of Academic Integrity including the use of generative AI. Presenting text, images, or other content created by others or by generative AI as your own work, even at the sentence, is grounds for failure of Capstone I and/or Capstone II.

1.12. Approximate Timeline

- **Fall or early Spring semester before your Capstone year:** Discuss your Capstone project idea(s) with potential faculty advisors and adjust your project in accordance with these conversations. You are encouraged to ask your professors what kinds of topics they would be interested in supervising.
- **Spring semester before your Capstone year:** Submit your Capstone Proposal form.
- **Last day of the Capstone I semester:** Submit your Capstone I portfolio to your primary and secondary advisors. Your advisors should communicate the requirements for your Capstone I portfolio at the start of Capstone I.
- **At least two weeks before the last day of the semester and at least one week before the Capstone defense:** Submit the defense draft to your advising committee.
- **One week before the last day of the Capstone II semester:** Last possible date for the Capstone defense.
- **Last day of the Capstone II semester (usually mid-May):** Submit the final project for grading.

2. Evaluation of the Project

Capstone students are subject to two major evaluations: one at the end of Capstone I, and another at the end of Capstone II.

2.1. The Evaluation Process

At the end of Capstone I, the primary advisor evaluates your progress to date and determines whether or not you are qualified to continue with Capstone II. You will receive one of the following results: Pass (indicating that you may continue to Capstone II) or No Pass (indicating that you have not met the requirements for Capstone II). The criteria for passing Capstone I may vary from project to project but should be clearly communicated to you at the beginning of the project year. Your primary advisor may consult the secondary advisor for input on your Capstone I results, but the decision ultimately falls to the primary advisor.

At the end of Capstone II, both readers (your primary advisor and secondary advisor) will evaluate your completed project and deliver a joint decision on your results. Your two readers will evaluate you on a scale of 1-5 points against the common History rubric (see below) and will return scores for each major component on the rubric. You will receive one of the following results based on your final score:

- Pass: 3.0-4.4
- Honors Pass: 4.5-5
- No Pass: 1.0-2.9

Each student will defend their project toward the end of Capstone II. The defense is required. However, the defense is not scored, and it does not contribute to the final score. The advising team may expect you to incorporate feedback from the defense into your final submission, but that feedback will not directly impact your final score. For more information on the defense, see the “Defense” section below.

Tip: A “Pass” on Capstone II is a very respectable result! Of course, most students hope to pass with honors, but the Honors Pass is reserved for projects that exceed expectations. Some students have been surprised to find that they met all the basic requirements and yet received only a “Pass.” However, our philosophy is that the Honors Pass is more meaningful—both to us and to other institutions—if it is highly selective. The Honors Pass roughly corresponds to a grade of A or A-.

2.2. The Defense

At the end of Capstone II, you are required to participate in a formal defense of your project, regardless of what format you have chosen. By default, this is a private defense, involving only the primary advisor, secondary advisor, and Capstone student. The basic format is as follows:

- You give a 15-20 minute presentation of the project;
- The primary and secondary advisors offer initial feedback and ask questions;
- You respond to the questions and feedback from the advising committee;
- You may engage in back-and-forth conversation about the project after this.

The defense is not directly scored. However, you will be expected to incorporate feedback from your defense into your final submission. Although this is a “defense,” you should not be overly defensive; instead, it is best to be honest about what you have and have not accomplished, as well as the problems and obstacles you have encountered. Your advisors will take this information into account when scoring your final submission.

Toward the beginning of Capstone II, you should work with your primary advisor to schedule your defense. The latest date on which you can schedule a defense is one week prior to the end of the Capstone II semester. However, you are strongly encouraged to schedule it earlier than this so that you have adequate time to incorporate feedback from the defense into your final submission.

2.3. The Common Rubric

Below is the Common Rubric by which all History Capstone projects are to be evaluated at the end of Capstone II. As with most disciplines, even clear rubric leaves some room for interpretation, so you should discuss the expectations of your advising team with both advisors toward the beginning of the year and respond to their feedback on early drafts of your work.

Evaluation Component	
1. Historical Reasoning	
1a. <u>Reasoning</u> :	The project reflects awareness of change over time, context, causality, contingency, and complexity.
1b. <u>Evidence</u> :	Explanations of change over time are supported by appropriate primary and secondary sources.
<u>Component 1 score: X/5</u>	
2. Originality	
2a. <u>Intervention</u> :	The project acknowledges existing work on a topic and articulates a novel contribution to knowledge of that topic.
2b. <u>Use of Sources</u> :	The project utilizes under-utilized sources or uses familiar sources in new ways to make an original contribution to knowledge about the past.
<u>Component 2 score: X/5</u>	
3. Communication	
3a. <u>Structure</u> :	The project is structured in a logical way that is conducive to communicating and supporting its key arguments.
3b. <u>Rhetoric</u> :	Ideas are clearly articulated from the sentence level upward.
3c. <u>Formatting</u> :	The submission is appropriately formatted, including the cover sheet, table of contents, sections, citations, and bibliography. For non-thesis submissions, the formatting requirements must be set at the beginning of the year in consultation with the advising team.
<u>Component 3 score: X/5</u>	
Cumulative Score: X/5 (mean of component scores)	

3. Guidelines for the Capstone by Thesis

3.1. Word Count

Generally, you should aim for a word count between 6,000 and 10,000 words. This will probably amount to less than 60 pages when double spaced, unless you include a large number of images, tables, or other non-textual items. Some projects may merit a longer or shorter word count, so you should set a word count expectation with your primary advisor by the end of Capstone I, or at the very latest, the start of Capstone II.

3.2. Formatting Requirements

The History faculty have developed the following requirements for Capstone projects that are produced in the format of a traditional written thesis:

- Font: 12-point Times New Roman
- Spacing: Double-spaced or 1.5 spacing (your advisor may have a preference)
- Margins: 1 inch on all sides
- Page numbers: Bottom-right corner
- Style and citation format: Chicago Style, 17th Edition

Note: For non-thesis submissions, the formatting requirements will be set at the beginning of the year in consultation with the advising team.

Tip: Writing a longer thesis isn't necessarily better! At the beginning of the year, students often feel daunted by the task of writing something longer than a course essay, yet ironically, toward the end of the year, students often submit a thesis that is far *longer* than what the faculty expect. A long thesis *can* be good, but it may also suggest that a student is having difficulty focusing their arguments. A short thesis can also be excellent. Think about it this way: it is far better to submit a 40-page thesis with 40 pages of solid writing than a 100-page thesis with 40 pages of solid writing and 60 pages of "bloat."

3.3 Sequence of Thesis Materials

The content of your thesis should be arranged in order and should meet the following requirements. The History program will provide a Word template for front matter, including the Title Page, Acknowledgments, and Table of Contents.

Front matter, in the following order:

- A. **Title Page.** The title page should include the title of the thesis, your name, the date of submission, and your advisor's name. Include this statement on the lower third of the page:

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts
In History, Fulbright University Vietnam

- B. **Acknowledgment(s) page.** Optional. Double-spaced. This should generally be no longer than one page.
- C. **Table of Contents.** A consecutive listing of chapters or major headings with page numbers; also include the page number for appendices (if included) and the bibliography. Double space between these elements.

Note: The front matter should be paginated using small Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, iv, v, and so on). These may be placed at the bottom of the page. The title page counts as page i, but do not print a page number on this page. Begin the pagination with the next page (acknowledgments page, if you have one, or the table of contents).

Text:

References in the Text: In-text citations must follow the Chicago Manual of Style, 17th edition, or another standardized citation style (e.g. Chicago, APA) appropriate to the project. If you wish to use a citation style other than Chicago style, you must consult your primary advisor first.

Pagination: Use Arabic numerals for these pages, starting with page 1 as the first page of the text.

Note: All pages through the text, and including the end material (appendices, illustrations, and bibliography), should be numbered consecutively in Arabic numerals.

Appendices. Optional. If you think you might want to include appendices (for example, additional tables or translated primary sources), consult your advisors.

Illustrations:

- You should include images when relevant to your arguments. Images should be placed within the main text body, close to their first mention.
- Place image callouts in the text by placing (fig. X) at the end of the sentence (before the period) which first mentions the artwork.
- Each image caption should be enumerated as Figure 1, Figure 2, etc.
- Illustrations should be neatly prepared, with full captions that include the name of the author (if applicable), title of the work, present location, date, and an acknowledgement of the source of the image. In some cases, your advisor may ask that you include additional information.

Bibliography:

You must include a Bibliography in alphabetical order (by author) at the end of your thesis, even though you will have cited your sources in each chapter using footnotes. The Bibliography must be formatted according to the Chicago Manual of Style, 17th Edition, or in another standard bibliographic style chosen in consultation with your primary advisor. You are encouraged to use Zotero (a free app) or other citation management software to generate your bibliography and citations more accurately and efficiently. The History program will provide sample bibliographies that you can use as models when building your own.