

Fulbright University Vietnam

Social Studies Capstone Handbook As of AY 2025-2026

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1. General Information

Descriptions

A capstone project represents the culmination of a student's learning journey, showcasing their mastery of the core outcomes and competencies of the Social Studies curriculum in a cohesive and meaningful manner. The student is expected to produce independent research that addresses a gap in the existing literature using social studies tools. A Social Studies Capstone can take the form of a written thesis or project.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Students who compete the Capstone will be able to:

CLO1. **Conduct** a substantial social scientific research project

CLO2. **Communicate** the results of their research through text or an applied project.

CLO3. **Conduct** a literature review and **generate** an annotated bibliography

CLO4. **Write** a successful IRB application

Social Studies Major Learning Outcomes

MLO1. Conduct social scientific research from proposal to implementation and communicate the results in an academic manner

MLO2. Apply and explain texts and concepts in social science theory.

MLO 3. Analyze, critique, and reflect upon the ethics of human-centered research.

MLO 4. Understand and apply empirical social scientific research methods that can be used to address pressing industrial, governmental, and societal needs

Mapping Course Learning Outcomes to Major Learning Outcomes (MLOs)

	MLO 1	MLO 2	MLO 3	MLO 4

CLO1.	X			X
CLO2	X			
CLO3		X		
CLO4			X	

1.1. Eligibility Criteria

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

- Major GPA: 3.5
- Social Inquiry, theory, and method requirements must be complete by the beginning of Capstone I

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

Remember, the capstone **should** demonstrate original critical and creative thinking, and we encourage primary research. However, it **should not** require extensive fieldwork. You should think very carefully about an appropriate scope of research and production for your proposed capstone. It is important for you to consult early on with your prospective advisor about this. Applications which do not demonstrate awareness of the scope and the practicalities needed to realize the capstone may not be approved.

Keep in mind that projects for which there is no current faculty expertise may not be approved. The 2025-2026 full-time faculty in Social Studies hold expertise in the following fields: anthropology; conflict studies; gender and sexuality studies; governance and public policy; international relations; legal and moral philosophy;

political science; qualitative and quantitative research methods; science and technology studies; security studies; communication; Indigenous studies; East Asian studies; and education.

***NOTE:** *Successful capstone applicants must maintain a 3.6 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.*

EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CAPSTONE **PROPOSALS**

EVALUATION CRITERIA	SCORE	COMMENTS
ORIGINALITY OF PROPOSED IDEA(S) AND RESEARCH AGENDA		
The proposal shows potential for the cultivation of an original argument around a topic in social studies (MLO2)		
The suggested scope of research is appropriately focused and corresponds to the areas of expertise within the SOCI program (MLO1)		
The proposal shows evidence of original, creative, and/or innovative thinking. (MLO4)		
Section Score		
RESEARCH RELEVANCE AND METHODOLOGICAL SOUNDNESS		
The proposal sufficiently surveys the relevant literature for the project's context. (MLO2)		

The methodological framework is ethical, its design clearly and logically communicated (MLO3, 4)		
The proposal shows signs of the student's ability to synthesize key theoretical frameworks appropriate to the project. (MLO2)		
The proposal adequately explains the capstone's relevance to contemporary concerns in Vietnam or globally. (MLO4)		
Section Score		
QUALITY OF WRITING AND ANALYSIS		
The proposal is clearly and logically structured (MLO1)		
The proposal is appropriately formatted for academic submission (illustrations, captions, page numbers, choice of font and font size, margins, etc.) (MLO 1)		1.
The language used is appropriate for formal academic presentation, free of typographical and grammatical errors (MLO1)		
The writing shows no evidence of plagiarism. Sources are properly cited and attributed by consistent use of a citation style (i.e. Chicago, APA, etc.) appropriate to the project (MLO 1, 3)		
Section Score		
PROOF OF RIGOROUS RESEARCH CONDUCT		
The student demonstrates the ability to follow the academic calendar without requests for extension (MLO 1)		

The student has met and discussed their ideas with the prospective faculty advisors (MLO 1)		
The student demonstrates the ability to communicate with clarity and timeliness (MLO 1)		
Section Score		
FINAL SCORE		

FINAL CUMULATIVE SCORE: 4.5 and above = ACCEPTANCE
3.5-4.4 = WAISTLISTED 1.0-3.4 = REJECTION

1.2. Allocation of advisor process

Successful applicants will provide a first choice of primary and secondary advisor and will be accommodated when prudent. 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.

1.3. Advising process

The primary advisor is your first point of contact, and should hold expertise relevant to your project, for example, in terms of being a specialist in the project's disciplinary field. The primary advisor will be the primary reviewer of your work in progress, and as such, will be the person with whom you meet most frequently. Expertise does not need to be regional or topical – an advisor may have a strong grounding in the theory or methodological approaches of the capstone rather than a specific research background in that topic.

The secondary advisor can offer you additional feedback where necessary and may represent a disciplinary field outside of Social Studies (if your project is interdisciplinary). In cases when the primary advisor is unable to continue, the secondary advisor will assume their role.

It is the responsibility of the student, and not the primary advisor, to maintain consistent contact with the secondary supervisor, updating them on progress, providing drafts, and informing them of any significant changes or challenges.

You should plan to meet with your primary advisor at least once a month, if not more often. **You are expected to be proactive in organizing these meetings with your advisors and to follow up on the meetings' actionable items.** The capstone places responsibility on you to be organized and to be responsible in regular communications and submission of work-in-progression to your primary advisor. **Failure to do this will result in receiving no higher than a "Pass".**

REMEMBER:

- ✓ *Respect your advisor's working hours*
- ✓ *Correspond professionally and courteously*
- ✓ *Use Fulbright email instead of social media platforms*
- ✓ *Be prepared at meetings (with materials, questions) and use your time efficiently*
- ✓ *You are responsible for setting up the meetings (and showing up!)*
- ✓ *Expect meetings to be about 30 minutes*

OTHER EXPECTATIONS:

- You cannot change your capstone's topic and format without consulting your advisors and getting their approval
- We expect you to demonstrate and maintain clear communication, a steady work ethic, a capacity for self-organization, and balanced management of your capstone workload with your other coursework
- Try to keep up with your timeline
- Manage your expectations in terms of what you can accomplish

1.4. The Social Studies Capstone Meetings

Approved Capstone students are expected to attend the major's biweekly Capstone meetings during Capstone I and monthly meetings during Capstone II. These meetings offer a disciplinary interface between all Capstone students, the Social Studies faculty, and visiting scholars (when applicable). The students will present any relevant updates on their project and receive active feedback from faculty other than their Primary and Secondary advisors. The meeting location and time will be determined at the beginning

of each Capstone phase to accommodate the faculty's and students' schedules and ensure general availability.

1.5. Capstone I

In Capstone I you will commence research and refine your project proposal and plan. Depending on the project, this will likely include development of a comprehensive bibliography and literature review focusing on background context, theoretical, and methodological approaches to the topic. You will complete your application for IRB approval and produce a concrete research plan for Capstone II. In some cases, students may begin the very initial stages of conducting an applied project with an industry partner (subject to your advisors' approval) or an ethnographic project with fieldwork components in or outside Ho Chi Minh City (subject to IRB approval).

Capstone I will be assessed by a combination of your active participation in the advising processes, and both a midterm and end-of-term submission. The midterm submission must demonstrate clear progression, and will be used to facilitate your advisors in guiding your research moving forward. The end-of-term submission will demonstrate successful progress towards the final capstone submission, and satisfactory completion of the criteria listed in the above paragraph.

What you might be expected to submit for Capstone I:

Midterm submission(s):

- Revised project proposal
- Initial fieldnotes or reflection
- Annotated bibliography

End-of-term submission (very likely a combination of some of the following):

- A literature review
- A sample chapter or introduction for your final paper
- Other materials to be decided on in consultation with your advisors

1.6. Capstone II

In Capstone II you will focus more on production, whether it is writing or realizing an applied project. You will participate in research in support of your final submission. In

addition to a written submission, at the end of Capstone II, you will also be encouraged to formally present your work.

Capstone II will be graded through assessment of a student's final submission. In addition, students are also required to actively participate in advising activities and provide regular updates including the midterm submission.

What you might be expected to submit for Capstone II:

Midterm submission(s):

- Drafts of chapters
- Documentation of an applied project's progress
- A rough draft or outline of a thesis

End-of-term submission:

- A completed written thesis
- A finished applied project plus its documentation/report

1.7. IRB Approval

If your project requires working with human subjects through processes that include, but are not limited to, in-person or online interviews, direct or indirect observations, opinion surveys, etc., 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 collection and protection. Please be advised that the IRB procedure applies to all forms of Social Studies Capstones project, whether written thesis, applied or creative project.

Students must obtain IRB approval **prior to** the period of their Fulbright-affiliated research. Failure to do so would result in delays to the project and/or its suspension. For this reason, Social Studies students are advised to **begin their IRB application as soon as their Capstone application is accepted**, or during Capstone I at the latest.

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

1.8. 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.

1.9. Grading process

For both Capstone I and II, the capstone project is to be graded by *both* the primary and secondary advisors, following what is known as a double-marking process.

1.10. Group projects

Group project proposals will **not** be considered.

2. Capstone by Thesis Guidelines

2.1. Word Count Regulations

The final submission should be 10,000-15,000 words, **including** endnotes or footnotes, **but not including** full bibliography and images with captions. Submissions that fall short of or exceed the allowed word count range will be subject to penalty.

2.2. Style and Formatting

Fonts:

- Times New Roman, Garamond, or Calibri preferred.
- 12- point font.
- Chapter headings and subheadings may be 13 or 14-point.

Margins:

- Use one-inch margins on all sides.
- Place page numbers in the lower right-hand corner within these margins.

Line spacing:

- The text must be double-spaced. Footnotes/endnotes, image captions, and long quoted passages should be single-spaced.
- The title page and preliminary pages are treated in special format; see below.

Sequence of Thesis Materials:

Preliminary pages, 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

- B. Acknowledgment(s) page. Optional. Double-spaced.
- C. Table of Contents. A consecutive listing of chapters or major headings with page numbers; also include the page number for the additional sections (illustrations, the appendix (if included), and the bibliography. Double space between these elements.
- D. List of Tables (as necessary), with titles and page references.
- E. List of Illustrations, with titles and page references.

Note: The preliminary pages 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 any standardized citation style (e.g. Chicago, APA) appropriate to the project. Discuss with your advisor.

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 have material you want to include here, please discuss that idea with your advisor.]

Illustrations

- You should include all illustrations that you discuss. 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.

- Please consult the [CAA Publications Style Guide, Section III](#) for more guidance on how to format captions for different kinds of visual materials.

Bibliography. Most publications in the arts and humanities format their bibliographies following the Chicago Manual of Style.

2.3. Formal Presentation

While this presentation is not assessed as part of the final submission, you are highly encouraged to give a formal 15-minute presentation at the Capstone Event at the end of the Spring semester. You are encouraged to attend the event and to engage with the presentations of your peers. Details are provided in section 4 of this handbook.

2.4. Evaluation Criteria: Capstone by Thesis

EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CAPSTONE PROJECTS: WRITTEN THESES

5=Strongly Agree 4=Agree 3=Neutral 2=Disagree 1=Strongly Disagree NA=Not applicable

EVALUATION CRITERIA	SCORE	COMMENTS
ORIGINALITY OF THESIS, ARGUMENTS, OR PROJECT		
The thesis develops a sophisticated and intelligent argument around a topic that is appropriately focused in scope. (MLO 1, 2)		
The thesis demonstrates evidence of original, creative, and/or innovative thinking. (MLO4)		
Section Score		
RESEARCH, RELEVANCE AND ENGAGEMENT WITH FIELD, AND METHODOLOGICAL SOUNDNESS		

The thesis contains a comprehensive view of literature relevant for the project's context. (MLO2)		
The thesis adopts a methodological framework and research ethics appropriate to the topic. (MLO4)		
The thesis critically engages with and adopts a synthetic approach to supporting theories. (MLO2)		
The thesis adequately explains the capstone's relevance to contemporary concerns in Vietnam or globally. (MLO4)		
Section Score		
QUALITY OF WRITING AND ANALYSIS		
The thesis frames research as a meaningful contribution within the context of methods, theory, and empirical evidence. (MLO2)		
The paper is clearly and logically structured, with smooth and effective transitions. (MLO1)		
Section Score		
APPROPRIATE ACADEMIC STYLE AND MECHANICS		
The thesis is appropriately formatted for academic submission (cover page, illustrations and captions, page numbers, choice of font and font size, margins, etc.) (MLO1)		
The language used is empirically grounded and appropriate for formal academic audience. (MLO1)		

Sources are cited appropriately, whether paraphrased or quoted. There is no evidence of plagiarism. (MLO3)		
The citation style (e.g., Chicago, MLA) is appropriately chosen based on the disciplinary field, and correctly used. (MLO3)		
The written expression is free or almost free of errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and word choice. (MLO1)		
Section Score		
TOTAL AVERAGE SCORE (average of section scores) *Excluding scores of N/A where permitted (as indicated by *)		

FINAL CUMULATIVE SCORE: 4.5 and above = HONORS 3.0-4.4 = PASS 1.0-2.9 = NO PASS

3. Capstone by Applied and Creative Project Guidelines

3.1. Submission Requirements

The final submission for a Capstone by Applied and Creative Project will be determined in consultation with a student's primary and secondary advisors, but must not depart from the requirement of an original work (a film, an exhibition, an installation, an event, a social program, etc.) accompanied by extensive documentation of the process through which such original work comes about. The Capstone by Applied and Creative Project also requires the fulfillment of a final Evaluation Report that clearly demonstrates the project's applicability and social impacts, provides evidence of rigorous evaluation, and includes insights or recommendations for applied action or future inquiry. Submissions that fall short in any of these areas will be subject to revision and/or penalties.

3.2. Non-academic Advisor

For applied and creative projects, students can request to work with an additional non-academic advisor in consultation with and subject to the approval of their primary and secondary academic advisors from the SOCI major.

3.4. Evaluation Reports

The primary written deliverable for the Capstone by Applied and Creative Project is the Evaluation Report. The Evaluation Report includes

- (1) the intellectual rationale of the project and its expected contributions to a given academic field within social studies,
- * (2) the goals of the project,
- (3) the evaluation questions regarding the degree to which the project met its goals, and
- (4) a critical evaluation that answers the evaluation questions based on the documentation of the process (see below) and any data collected. Scoring of the evaluation report is based on the completeness, critical depth, intellectual rigor, and effective use of evidence and theory, not on whether the project appears to have met its goals.

The appendix of the Evaluation Report includes documentation of the process, consisting of relevant research, material experimentation, timelines, documentary photographs of the project in chronological development, and references (if applicable). This component may also include an archive of footage, visual documents, interview materials, etc, in the case of a media submission. The research component should be novel and conducted during the two capstone phases and not taken from assignment work from earlier courses. The intent of the documentation is to provide the audience/readers with a complete understanding of how the applied project came to be and as a key data source for the critical evaluation of how well the study met its aims.

3.5. Logistical Support:

If the applied or creative project involves logistical preparation outside the scope of the university academic structure, the student is responsible for informing the faculty of Social Studies and all related Fulbright functionaries of any logistics necessary to the fulfillment of such project in a timely manner. This includes but is not limited to,

- Events organized by the student with partners inside or outside of Fulbright University Vietnam.
- Creative endeavor (filmmaking, exhibition organizing)
- Any project that might entail questions of liability for the student and/or the institution

3.5 Evaluation Criteria: Capstone by Applied and Creative Project

EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CAPSTONE PROJECTS:

APPLIED AND CREATIVE PROJECT

5=Strongly Agree 4=Agree 3=Neutral 2=Disagree 1=Strongly Disagree NA=Not applicable

CRITERIA	SCORE	COMMENTS
INTELLECTUAL RATIONALE		

The project clearly connects to and builds on Social Studies research and questions . (MLO4)		
The project has sophisticated and intelligent goals that are appropriately focused in scope (MLO1, 4).		
The project demonstrates evidence of original, creative, and/or innovative thinking. (MLO4)		
The project implements research-based practice as a meaningful approach to socially minded, applied projects. (MLO4)		
Section Score		
PROCESS AND DOCUMENTATION		
The planning and production of the deliverables are properly aligned with the agreed-upon capstone schedule. (MLO1)		
Documentation of the process of conducting the applied project is comprehensive, including academic material, data collection, experimentation, and visual records of the project in different stages of development during Capstone I and/or the earlier phase of Capstone II (MLO1)		
The project utilizes appropriate formal strategies (creative or otherwise) to communicate and deliver its intentions. (MLO1)		
Section Score		
The Evaluation Report includes a critical evaluation which examines the available evidence to examine whether the project has met its goals, drawing on social studies theories and perspectives (MLO1, 4)		

The Evaluation Report is clearly and logically structured, with proper scaffolding and effective transition (MLO1)		
Section Score		
APPROPRIATE ACADEMIC STYLE AND MECHANICS FOR THE WRITTEN COMPONENTS		
The written component of the project is appropriately formatted for academic submission (cover page, illustrations and captions, page numbers, choice of font and font size, margins, etc.) (MLO1)		
The language used is empirically grounded and appropriate for a formal academic audience. (MLO1)		
Sources are cited appropriately, whether paraphrased or quoted. There is no evidence of plagiarism. (MLO3)		
The citation style (e.g., Chicago, MLA) is appropriately chosen based on the disciplinary field, and correctly used. (MLO3)		
The written expression is free or almost free of errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and word choice. (MLO1)		
Section Score		
TOTAL AVERAGE SCORE (average of section scores)		

*Excluding scores of N/A where permitted (as indicated by *)		
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FINAL CUMULATIVE SCORE: 4.5 and above = HONORS 3.0-4.4 = PASS 1.0-2.9 = NO PASS

4. Capstone Presentation

4.1 Timeline of the Capstone Presentation:

At the end of Capstone II, students are highly recommended to present their findings to the larger Fulbright community. The Capstone presentation, while not a graded component of the final evaluation, presents a chance for graduating seniors to share their work and insights into the process of conducting intensive research and researched-based projects to a wider public.

The yearly presentation is planned to take place at the end of Capstone II, during the last two weeks of the Spring semester.

4.2. Format of the Capstone Presentation:

The format of the capstone presentation should be decided between the student and his/her advisors. Possible formats include, but are not limited to, an audio-visual presentation, a selective reading of written materials, a showcase of the research process, an interactive procedure that integrates the audience, a film screening, etc.

APPENDIX I: Social Studies Degree Requirements

A Bachelor of Arts in Social Studies is awarded following successful completion of:

1. 5 Core courses (20 credits) and 8 Exploratory courses (32 credits), of which up to two Exploratory courses (8 credits) can be counted towards the major**
2. Fulbright Seminar (4 credits, optional) and Experiential Learning (4 – 12 credits)**
3. 1 Foundational survey course – Social Inquiry (4 Credits)
4. 1 Foundational methods course (4 Credits)
5. 1 Foundational theory course (4 credits)
6. 6 Courses offered by the Social Studies Major, at least 2 of which must be at an advanced (300) level. (24 Credits)
7. 2 Additional Courses in the Major (either regular major, or major with capstone) (8 credits)

Regular Major Requirements

2 Additional courses offered by the Social Studies Major, at least 1 of which must be advanced (300) level. This can be taken in lieu of the major with capstone requirements. (8 credits)

Major with Capstone Requirements

- 1. Minimum GPA Threshold (3.5/4) by Summer of a Student's Third Year**
- 2. 1 Capstone I (4 credits)**
- 3. 1 Capstone II (4 credits)**

****The Core and Exploratory Requirements are subject to university-wide revisions and will be communicated to all SOCI majors prior to the second semester of their third year, at the latest.**