



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY  
School of Continuing Studies  
Journalism

## MPJO-900-01: CAPSTONE

### GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS JOURNALISM

Tuesdays, 5:15 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. | SUMMER 2016

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Downtown campus, Room C116

- Office hours are by appointment.

### COURSE OVERVIEW

The Master of Professional Studies Journalism degree program culminates in the Capstone. Each student produces a substantive and original reporting project on a timely issue that showcases his/her talents as a prospective journalist. It should be a major work of professional quality that requires extensive legwork, interviewing and research and will become the centerpiece of your portfolio.

The Capstone experience is intended to provide students an opportunity to demonstrate that they have the journalistic skills, ethics and initiative necessary to be a professional journalist. The Capstone project is an independent reporting endeavor. Class sessions provide feedback and structure. Group instructors will give you guidance throughout the semester, and your small groups will serve as mini-newsrooms where you will be expected to give each other feedback and support.

Successful completion of the MPSJ degree also requires submitting an ethics essay that reflects on your firsthand experience as a journalist. The essay will be graded as one of the assignments in the Capstone class.

**This is a core course of the MPS Journalism program, and students must earn a “B” (83) or higher to pass the course. Please see the Graduate Student Handbook for more details. Students with at least a 3.0 cumulative GPA who receive a final grade of a B- or below may receive one opportunity to retake the course, if approved by the dean.**

By the end of the semester, students will be expected to:

- Report out a timely story idea that maintains a narrow focus
- Demonstrate reporting initiative and thoroughness



- Demonstrate the ability to work independently and problem solve
- Develop a strategic media plan for content distribution
- Produce a professional quality story that makes use of at least two media elements

### RECOMMENDED READING

All students are expected to have the AP Stylebook and use it.

There is no additional required text for this class, but your group instructor may assign specific articles to read. Students must be prepared to discuss any of those assigned readings in class. Instructors also may list on Blackboard suggested books and articles.

### ATTENDANCE

A successful class depends on the active engagement of all students. Students should turn off all cell phones, pagers or other communication devices while in class. Class discussions should be respectful and considerate of others' views and opinions. What happens in class stays in class.

Students are expected to attend every class and arrive on time. If you are unable to come to class or if you know will not be there on time, you are responsible for notifying your group instructor via email prior to the start of class. There are no excused absences.

As outlined by the university, missing more than two classes will result in a final grade reduction of one level (for example, an A will be converted to an A-). **Absences for classes, beyond the initial two, will result in further reduction of the final grade.** If you are absent for more than four classes, you will be in danger of failing this course.

Students are expected to stay in touch with their group instructor throughout the semester, including during weeks when the class does not meet. Generally, these check-ins can take place in person, over the phone, via email or a blog post. At least once in June and once in July students will meet in person with their group instructor, outside of regular class meetings. These meetings are mandatory and are subject to the attendance policy.

In the event of a weather emergency (or any other widespread emergency) that would close the Georgetown Downtown building during one of our in-class sessions, we will plan to meet virtually through online videoconferencing tools.

### OTHER GUIDELINES

Students must turn in a budget line for their project by Feb. 21 that states the topic, sums up the initial idea and lists the proposed format. They will then be assigned a group instructor and meet one-on-one their instructor to prepare them to write their proposals. Proposals are due at



noon on March 29, and students will be notified by April 5 if their proposal has been accepted or rejected for the summer semester.

The program and instructors may give students **ONE** additional opportunity to submit a new or updated proposal, if the first proposal is rejected. If a second proposal is rejected, then the student will have to wait until the next semester to submit a new Capstone proposal. **Only students with accepted proposals can enroll in and take the summer Capstone class.**

If you decide to make a substantive shift in topic at any point after your proposal has been approved, you must immediately notify your group instructor and the Faculty Director to get permission to move forward. Small shifts in focus should be discussed with your group instructor as you go through the semester.

All sources must be on the record. Any exceptions to this rule must be the result of extreme circumstances and must be approved in advance by your group instructor. You are required to provide a source list with your work plan, outline, draft and final. Your grade for each assignment will be based in part on the source list. The source list for the draft and final must include full names, phone numbers and/or emails for sources. The MPSJ Capstone team may do a spot check of your primary and secondary sources.

The Faculty Director and course instructors will post all general resources for the class (including assignment sheets, tip sheets and announcements) on Blackboard. In addition, the Faculty Director and course instructors may use Blackboard to facilitate feedback and discussion in between class sessions.

Students **MUST** pay close attention to the rubrics for each assignment. They are designed to help you understand how you will be evaluated. Failure to adhere to them will result in unsatisfactory grades.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

Separate handouts will be posted on Blackboard detailing assignment requirements:

Work Plan: A timeline and reporting strategy for the Capstone project with source list, which includes reporting challenges you expect to face (these challenges must be different than the ones outlined in your Ethics Essay)

**Deadline: Noon on May 31**

Ethics Essay: A discussion of ethical challenges you expect to face in your reporting and how you will overcome them (these challenges must be different than the ones outlined in the Work Plan)

**Deadline: Noon on June 7**



Opening/Outline: Draft opening and nut section and/or storyboard with expected content mapped out, including list of secured elements and updated source list

**Deadline: Noon on June 21**

Project Draft: A full first version of your project with all required elements [for both dominant and complementary media](#).

**Deadline: Noon on July 19**

Final Project: A revised project meeting all Capstone criteria

**Deadline: Noon on August 9**

In addition to assignments, you will be assessed on your overall process. That includes meeting deadlines, responding to feedback, posting to the Blackboard blogs, engaging in the group sessions and staying on track.

**Each assignment is due by noon on the assigned day**, via email to [CapstoneassignmentsMPSJ@gmail.com](mailto:CapstoneassignmentsMPSJ@gmail.com). The Faculty Director will be a second reader and grader on the Ethics essays, drafts and final projects.

Any assignment submitted after the noon deadline will be docked five points whether it is 20 minutes late or three hours late. An assignment submitted more than 24 hours after the deadline will be docked 10 points. Assignments submitted more than two days after the deadline will not be accepted and students will receive an automatic zero.

## GRADING

Your course grade will be based on the following:

Work plan:	5 points
Opening and outline:	5 points
Ethics Essay:	10 points
Project draft:	15 points
Final project:	60 points
Process:	5 points
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100 points</b>

Graduate course grades include A, A-, B+, B, B-, C and F. **There are no grades of C+, C- or D.**

A	100-93	B-	82.99-80
A-	92.99-90	C	79.99-70
B+	89.99-88	F	69.99-0
B	87.99-83		



The instructors will provide a warning by mid-semester to any student who appears to be on track for a poor final grade.

### UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Georgetown offers a variety of support systems for students that can be accessed on main campus or at the downtown location:

- MPS Writing Resource Program  
202-687-4246  
<http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu/>
- Academic Resource Center  
202-687-8354 | [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu)  
<http://ldss.georgetown.edu/>
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services  
202-687-6985  
<http://caps.georgetown.edu/>

### STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY

Students with documented disabilities have the right to specific accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the course. Students with disabilities should contact the Academic Resource Center (202-687-8354; [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu); <http://ldss.georgetown.edu/index.cfm>) before the start of classes to allow time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. If accommodations are recommended, you will be given a letter from ARC to share with your professors. You are personally responsible for completing this process officially and in a timely manner. Neither accommodations nor exceptions to policies can be permitted to students who have not completed this process in advance.

### GEORGETOWN HONOR SYSTEM

All students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic and personal integrity in pursuit of their education at Georgetown. Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense, and students found in violation are subject to academic penalties that include, but are not limited to, failure of the course, termination from the program, and revocation of degrees already conferred. All students are held to the Honor Code. The Honor Code pledge follows:



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*In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and To conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.*

## **PLAGIARISM**

Stealing someone else's work is a terminal offense in journalism, and it will wreck your career in academia, too. Students are expected to work with integrity and honesty in all their assignments. The Georgetown University Honor System defines plagiarism as "the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another." More guidance is available through the Gervase Programs at <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html>. If you have any doubts about plagiarism, paraphrasing and the need to credit, check out <http://www.plagiarism.org>.

## **SYLLABUS MODIFICATION**

The syllabus may change to accommodate discussion of emerging topics. Also, the schedules of guest speakers may require some shifting of our agenda. The instructors will make every effort to provide as much advance notice as possible for any alterations.



## CLASS SCHEDULE

### WEEK 1 (TUESDAY, May 24)

#### Overview & Tips for Success

Walk through Capstone requirements.

Discuss expectations for Work Plan and Ethics Essay.

MPSJ alumni will share their experiences on producing a successful Capstone project.

Break up into small groups.

### WORK PLAN DUE BY MIDNIGHT SUNDAY MAY 30

### WEEK 2 (TUESDAY, May 31)

**Independent Work & Individual Meetings with Group Instructor to discuss work plans**

### WEEK 3 (TUESDAY, June 7)

#### Storyboarding and Research Tips

Tips on storyboarding for video and photography projects and/or complementary pieces.

Resources and guidance on evaluating research and data in your reporting.

Small group discussion on progress.

**Ethics essay due by noon**

### WEEK 4 (TUESDAY, June 14)

#### Ethics Roundtable/Story Structure

Discuss requirements and expectations for Opening/Outline assignment.

Tips on how to structure longer stories.

Discuss ethical challenges you expect to face in your reporting

Break into small groups for updates

### WEEK 5 (TUESDAY, June 21)

**Independent Work & Individual Meetings with Group Instructor**

**Outline/opening due by noon**

### WEEK 6 (TUESDAY, June 28)

#### Workshop

Discussion of openings and outlines/storyboards with small group

### WEEK 7 (TUESDAY, July 5)

**Independent Work & Individual Meetings with Group Instructor**



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**WEEK 8 (TUESDAY, July 12)**

**Content Strategy and Pitching**

Discussion of how to finalize your target media outlet and how to pitch your project.

Discussion of requirements and expectations for Drafts.

Break into small groups.

**WEEK 9 (TUESDAY, July 19)**

**Independent Work & Individual Meetings with Group Instructor**

**First Draft due by noon**

**WEEK 10 (TUESDAY, July 26)**

**Workshop**

Reminders about requirements and expectations for final projects.

Discussion of drafts with small group

**WEEK 11 (TUESDAY, August 2)**

**Independent Work & Individual Meetings with Group Instructor**

**WEEK 12 (TUESDAY, August 9)**

**Final Project due by noon**

**WEEK 13 (TUESDAY, August 16)**

**Capstone Symposium**