COMM 450-Capstone

SOC Room 013

Mondays 4:15-6:45

Instructor: Patty Lamberti

plamberti@luc.edu

Office: Room 223 SOC

Office hours:

Tuesdays 5-6

Thursdays 2:30 – 3:30

Or by appointment, Skype, Facetime, Google Hangout

312-915-6860

Faculty advisors: Patty Lamberti (plamberti@luc.edu) or another faculty member.

Course overview:

The Master's Capstone involves the integration of new media tools and storytelling, culminating in a professional project that is conveyed to a target audience and widely distributed. The project should be the focal point of your online portfolio. It should be the one piece that makes a potential employer say, "I must hire this Loyola grad!"

You will produce a variety of written documents to accompany each project, including:

- A proposal that outlines the idea, the target audience, hard data about why this target audience would be interested in this project, a detailed plan of how you will reach that audience, etc.
- A schedule of deadlines which you adhere to throughout the semester
- Extensive original research/interviews
- Pre-production documents specific to your project. These types of documents may include rough drafts, storyboards, wireframes, concept documents, etc.
- A final report that includes a bibliography, proof that the project was distributed digitally and any corresponding metrics proving it reached the target audience

Formats:

The project(s) must be non-fiction, and digital in nature. The scope of the project will vary by student. See "professional project guidelines" document.

Course Policies

Absences and Tardiness:

We will not meet as a group every week. But you are expected to be here, on time, when we do meet. These sessions are important. They will help you stay on track. You will also be inspired by your classmates' projects. You will receive valuable feedback from your classmates and me during these sessions. You will also hone your critiquing skills during these sessions as you provide feedback to your colleagues.

 If you need to miss a class due to an illness or emergency, you need to:

1) notify me beforehand and explain your absence

2) provide documentation that explains your absence

It is up to my discretion to accept this documentation or not. If your excuse is valid and verified, you may make up whatever you missed. If you don't explain your absence, or provide documentation, and your excuse is not valid, your absence will not be excused and you cannot make up the work.   Missing class will result in lower scores in the areas of participation and professionalism.

Deadlines:

You will develop your own deadlines for this class. It is imperative you meet these deadlines. In the past, students who waited until the last few weeks to work on their capstone projects ended up with low quality, sub-par projects.

If you do not meet your deadlines, including all pre-production documents, you can expect a lower score in the areas of participation, professionalism and documentation.

Participation and Professionalism:

You will never be penalized for voicing your opinions, whatever they may be.

You will, however, be penalized for disrupting the class. Talking on cell phones, texting, interfering with classmates, e-mailing, arriving late/leaving early, sleeping, closing your eyes and hoping I don't notice, doing Sudoku, instant messaging and using computer programs other than the ones we are working on in class will lead to a lowering of the professionalism portion of your grade. The golden rules? While we are talking, don't touch anything electronic. While we are using the computer, only use software we are working with.

The number of classes you miss will also affect your professionalism and participation grades. You can't participate if you're not in class. Not coming to class is also not very professional. If you don't notify me in advance of your absences, you will receive a lower score in this area.

You will also be penalized for not speaking at all. To be a successful communication professional (or successful in any field), you must learn how to voice your opinions. Your participation and professionalism grades start at 0. It's up to you to work your way up the grade scale.

The grading scale for participation is as follows:

A: Frequent and meaningful contributions to class discussion, thoughtful input to classmates, etc.

B: Frequent and meaningful contribution to class discussion, occasional feedback to classmates, etc.

C: Occasional participation to class discussion.

D: Only participates when called upon.

F : No class participation

Your faculty advisor will also contribute his/her thoughts on your participation and professionalism.

Academic Dishonesty Policy:

Plagiarism of any form, of any kind and of any length will be reported to the Dean of Students and the student will automatically receive a failing grade for the course.

Cheating on in-class assignments or any other work associated with this class will receive a similar punishment. As you know, plagiarism constitutes using another's words or ideas without acknowledgment.

It is also considered equally dishonest to invent quotes, facts, scenarios and so on. I will occasionally check to verify that you have indeed interviewed the people you claim to have interviewed.

I also consider it an act of dishonesty to turn in work for an assignment in this class that you produced for another class (any semester, any year). You must turn in original work for all class assignments.

For all types of projects, no copyrighted material of any kind (including music) can be used without written permission from the copyright holder(s). All material must be properly sourced according to legal guidelines.

Grading and Evaluation:

Your grade will be determined by the quality of your project, the quality of accompanying documents, and your participation/professionalism in our group meetings and in your interactions with the faculty advisor.

Your final grade will be determined in the following manner:

Project: 900 points

Documentation, including the final report, proposal, deadline schedule, interviews/research, etc.: 50 points

Professionalism/participation in group meetings and with faculty advisor: 50 points

Process:

1.   Brainstorm an idea that fits the criteria outlined in the "professional project guidelines" document. Note that each student must complete a project that showcases his/her skills. While you can help one another, you cannot submit a group project.

2.   Develop a project proposal. The proposal should detail:

- the project idea
- its format
- the intended audience (age, gender, etc.)
- Research that explains why you think this is the intended audience, and why they'd be interested in your project
- A plan on where/how the project will be distributed and promoted
- A schedule of self-imposed deadlines

3.   Find a faculty member to serve as your advisor for the semester. The faculty member should have an interest in the field, and the time to give you practical advice, feedback, help you with the technology needed to produce the project, etc. Your faculty sponsor may be me or another SOC professor. Faculty members are not required to act as advisors. Show him/her your proposal, explain why you think he/she would be the best fit to work with you, explain how much time you will need from him/her, explain how you'd like to receive feedback (in person or virtually), and how often you'd like to meet.

I'm always willing to serve as your advisor. We can meet during this class period on the weeks we are not meeting as a large group. We can meet privately during my office hours. We can also email each other, Skype, Facetime, or share screens and consult via Google Hangouts.

4.   As soon as you have found an advisor, give him/her your proposal and a list of deadlines you will meet this semester. This deadline document will serve as a syllabus of sorts. The pre-production documents noted above should be included in this syllabus, and you should receive feedback from your advisor on these documents.

5.   During the semester, work with your advisor on the project itself. You should check in with your sponsor weekly or biweekly to provide updates on your work, ask for advice, receive feedback and critiques, etc. Note that this class does not meet every week. That is because you we are expecting you to spend the class time working on this project, meeting with your advisor, learning software, etc. These 2.5 hours are *in addition to* the six hours per week you should be allotting for each course you are enrolled in.

6.   During our last class, you will submit the project and a report outlining:

- Sources for facts (a bibliography)
- Contact information for anyone interviewed/consulted for the project
- How/where the project was distributed to the intended audience (note you should have already done this by the end of the semester)
- Methods undertaken to promote the project
- Any corresponding web metrics/proof of distribution

Syllabus for this class:

We will meet certain weeks to check in with one another on the progress of our projects, and learn from one another's successes and failures. We will help each other troubleshoot issues as they arise. During these classes, you will each be given five minutes to show us the work you have completed by that date. You should always have something new to show.

January 12

Topic: The Capstone – what it is and what it isn't; how do I figure out who my target audience is? Where do I find research on my target audience?

January 19

No class; Martin Luther King Holiday

January 26

Meet in classroom at 5:30. Be prepared to pitch your project in under five minutes. Documents due to me and your advisor at this time:

- a hard copy of your proposal including the name of your advisor
- Schedule of your due dates for the project

February 2

Independent Work Week

February 9

Meet in classroom at 5:30.

1. Be prepared to show us, in under 5 minutes, exactly what you have accomplished thus far.
2. In this class, we will also discuss what software program you will need to know to complete your projects and find strategies to learn, or learn more, about that software this month.

February 16

Independent work week

February 23

Independent Work week

March 2

No class; Spring Break

March 9

Meet in classroom at 5:30. Be prepared to show updated project in under 5 minutes. Be prepared to discuss roadblocks, successes, and share tips/advice.

ALL PRE-PRODUCTION DOCUMENTS SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY THIS POINT.

March 16

Independent Work Week

March 23

Independent Work Week

March 30

Meet in classroom at 5:30. Be prepared to show updated project in under five minutes. Be prepared to share and discuss roadblocks, successes, etc.

April 6

Independent work week

April 13

Independent work week

April 20

Meet in classroom with your finished project. Be prepared to show/discuss. Final projects and final report due today to the advisor unless you have worked out another agreement with your advisor.