The Capstone Class –FAQ’s

Although the Sociology majors’ Handbook provides an accurate description of the sociology capstone requirement, it fails to provide answers to several questions student often have about their capstone classes. This paper will provide answers to those questions.

**What is a capstone class, and why am I required to take one?**
In an architectural context, a capstone is the top-most stone that completes a building. In an academic context, a capstone is the final class that completes a student’s curriculum. In other words, a capstone is a class in which senior liberal arts majors are required to pull together what they have learned in their previous classes and use this integrating experience to demonstrate that they are capable of doing what they should be able to do as they graduate from the program (think critically, perform research and evaluate others’ research, write in acceptable academic style). This process serves a dual purpose. It provides sociology majors with a final opportunity to practice and demonstrate the skills they will need to succeed after graduation on the job or in graduate school. It also presents the Sociology Department with a final opportunity to assess whether or not it has been successful in its mission to produce competent sociology majors.

**What kinds of Capstone classes are available?**
The IUPUI Sociology Department offers its majors a choice of three capstones.

- **An empirical research project (R497).** This may be either an extended research paper or actual sociological research, under the guidance of one of the Sociology Faculty (who will be your Capstone Advisor). This project may be done in the Fall or Spring Semester. A Capstone Proposal form, signed by your Capstone Advisor, must be submitted to the Director of Undergraduate Studies 8-10 weeks prior to the beginning of the semester (before registering for the course). *Only Sociology Majors with a 3.0 GPA or higher in their Sociology courses may do a research project for their capstone.*

- **An internship (R494),** which allows students to apply what they have learned about in sociology to the workplace, and also gives them valuable career experience. It involves an internship placement where you would work 10 hours per week, plus regular meetings with a Sociology Faculty member (who will be your Capstone Advisor) and a written project or paper. This internship may be done in the Fall or Spring Semester, or, with special departmental permission, in the Summer. A Capstone Proposal form, signed by your Capstone Advisor, must be submitted to the Director of Undergraduate Studies 8-10 weeks prior to the beginning of the semester (before registering for the course). *Only Sociology Majors with a 3.0 GPA or higher in their Sociology courses may do an internship for their capstone.*

- **The Capstone Seminar (R498).** This is offered in both the Fall and Spring semesters. It focuses on careers available to Sociology majors and the skills needed for them.
**What capstone class should I take?**
The answer to this question depends on what you are preparing to do after you graduate. If you plan to enter a graduate program and/or profession that would require you to perform research, then either R497 or the Capstone Seminar would be your wisest choice. If you plan to apply the principles you have learned as an undergraduate sociology major in the workplace after graduation, and if you have some idea what type of work you will be doing, an internship (R494) may be your wisest choice, but the Capstone Seminar might also be helpful. If you are not sure what you will do after graduation, the best choice would be the Capstone Seminar, which is specifically designed, in part at least, to explore career options.

**When should I take my Capstone Class?**
You should take the Capstone during your Senior year, after you have completed all or most of your other sociology classes. Unless there are special extenuating circumstances, students will not be permitted to register for the capstone until they have completed the other required sociology courses and at least 4 of the 5 electives. We have found that students who attempt their Capstone in the summer rarely manage to finish. *Therefore, with the rare exception of an Internship Capstone, students will not be permitted to do their Capstone in the summer.* Note also that the Capstone Seminar is now being offered in both the Fall and Spring semesters.

If you are planning to register for R497 or R494, you will need to make arrangements ahead of time. The Capstone Checklist, on page 14 of the Student Handbook as well as the sociology web page [http://liberalarts.iupui.edu/sociology/](http://liberalarts.iupui.edu/sociology/), describes the steps which R494 and R497 students need to complete, or you may check with the Director of Undergraduate Studies, who will go over the procedure with you. In any case, this should be done early in the semester *prior* to when you intend to do your Capstone.

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