SMU MASTER OF LIBERAL STUDIES
CAPSTONE REQUIREMENTS

A capstone experience required of all MLS students in order to fulfill the requirements for graduation with a Master of Liberal Studies degree (All students who were admitted in Fall of 2009 or later are required to complete this to graduate).

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING PARAMETERS:

1. The capstone experience will be conducted as directed study independently with a faculty mentor of the student's choosing.
2. The capstone should be completed as the last course of a student's program for this degree.
3. MLS students earning a concentration must pursue a capstone project related to the curricular field area of the concentration.
4. Once a student has chosen their faculty advisor, they will co-design the proposal and submit their topic and/or project using the form attached to the MLS Director and Simmons School Dean.
5. Available options for capstone proposal submission may be found below.
6. Once the capstone proposal has been approved, an individual capstone course will be created especially for the student by the MLS Director.
    a. Both the capstone student and directing faculty member will receive confirmation of the proposals approval or revisions required via email.
    b. The course title and class number will be sent via email to both student and faculty member once approved.
    c. Student is expected to register himself or herself via Access.SMU before the start of the semester in which they plan to do the capstone work.

CAPSTONE/THESIS OPTIONS:

MLS Students have a choice between the following capstone options to satisfactorily complete their degree program and to prepare for further graduate work:

1. **The Thesis** –(minimum 6 credit hours – two consecutive semesters at least) a two-course option which comprises a substantial, original contribution. A faculty member advises a student as he/she finds a problem or unsolved question and aids

in the writing of a 75-100+ formal, analytical research paper. The thesis generally reflects the student's area of concentration and interest throughout the graduate program. Thesis papers will follow the traditional university requirements for submission, presentation and defense.

2. **The Portfolio Project** –(3 credits – delivered as an independent study) In the Human Experience, the student is encouraged to keep copies of his/her best work throughout the program (from each course taken). Portfolio submissions as a final project might include an analysis of a student's own work as it related to their own question upon entering the program. Selections from written papers, oral presentations, research studies, course projects completed during the program, might be revealed in a 20-25 page reflective essay. This project allows the student to organize and integrate their journey through the MLS program starting from their admission essay through their final reflection. Some portfolios may include:
    a. Descriptions of projects completed solo or in group presentations
    b. Formal or informal writing from journals to exams
    c. Creative writing (poetry, fiction, memoirs)
    d. Electronic media (videotapes, audiotapes, web pages/sites)
    e. Visual artifacts that represent involvement in a course goal – photos, scrapbooks, paintings, pottery, tapestries, sculpture, etc.

3. **The Graduate Project** – (3 credits– delivered as an independent study) The Graduate Project allows the student the opportunity to conclude the program by writing in an area of special interest, independent of course structure, with the guidance of a faculty member. These are student-designed projects that incorporate concepts and knowledge gained throughout the program. A written paper (20-30 pages) may include tapes, slides, and other materials. Final projects are generally submitted in the form of a research paper.
4. **The Creative Project** – (3 credits– delivered as an independent study) Students may write a series of short stories, poems, memoir or craft a piece of visual art, theatre, music, etc. These projects are generally supplemented by a short analytical written piece (20-25 pages) that surveys some important literature in their fields of interest and explains how their pieces compare with that literature.
5. **Internship or Service Experience** –(3 credits– delivered as an independent study) Provides students with hands-on experience in an area of interest as well as a service component. Students are expected to perform 30 hours (minimum) of service or internship along with the submission of a 20-25 page analysis of the experience. This provides students the opportunity to conduct research in the field and report on findings.

Prospective graduates are strongly encouraged to participate in the Capstone Forum prior to graduation in May each year. All students present their final projects or theses at this time in a casual conference-style format. Students will be assigned a table from which to explain their projects to attendees, family, friends and fellow students. Students may invite as many guests as they would like to. This will be a community event or reception where students, faculty and administrators come together to celebrate the work of graduating students. We highly encourage all students to consider submitting their capstone work to the MLS Journal "Pony Express(ions)" or to Confluence, the AGLSP Journal for Graduate Liberal Studies programs nation-wide.

SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY

MASTER OF LIBERAL STUDIES

SMU MASTER OF LIBERAL STUDIES

INDEPENDENT CAPSTONE PROPOSAL

Please complete the following form, secure the appropriate signatures and return to the MLS office for review.

Student Name:_____

SMU Student ID Number:_____

Email Address:_____

Directing Professor:_____

Capstone Option: (*please circle one***)**

THESIS –

Please follow guidelines in MLS student handbook to submit thesis proposals.

PORTFOLIO PROJECT

GRADUATE PROJECT

CREATIVE PROJECT

INTERNSHIP/SERVICE

Topic or Title of Capstone:_____

Number of Credit Hours Expected:_____

Semester of Study:_____

Date to be Completed:_____

Project Description: (Please describe the nature of the project and topics covered in detail as well as the page length of the writing contribution expected)

Reading List:

Evaluation Methods: (Sample guides and rubrics are available from the MLS Director)

Grading Rubric: (Please describe in detail the grading rubric to be used to evaluate the project and student achievement, i.e. what level of work constitutes a grade of "A", "B", etc.)

Written Assignment Guidelines: (Please describe in detail the guidelines that will be used to assess the student's written work, for example: depth of thought and analysis, synthesis and congruency, thoroughness, personalization and clarity of writing and mechanics)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Student's Signature:_____**Date**_____

Directing Professor's Signature:_____**Date**_____

Approvals:

☐ **Approved** ☐ **Not Approved**

MLS Director:_____**Date**_____

☐ **Approved** ☐ **Not Approved**

Simmons Dean:_____**Date**_____

Revisions Required: