



School of Policy, Government,
and International Affairs

Biodefense Capstone - ONLINE

BIOD 790 Spring 2019

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GETTING STARTED. I strongly recommend doing the following things to get off to a good start – ideally as soon as you can and well before the term begins.

1. Read the entire syllabus
2. Read all of the capstone assignment materials, rubrics, etc.
3. Make sure you have marked all the deadlines noted on pp. 3-4
4. Watch these three short videos:
 - a. Course welcome
 - b. Thrall's 8-Fold Process (technically assigned for week 2)
 - c. Finding a Good Topic (technically assigned for week 2)
5. Email to introduce yourself to your writing partner
6. Log in to the course Blackboard site and introduce yourself in the first thread of the Writer's Workshop (discussion board)

1. Course Description

This course provides students with the opportunity to hone their research, writing, and collaboration skills through completion of a capstone project that synthesizes the theoretical and subject matter knowledge students have gained in the program.

Though the final responsibility for each project will rest with individual students, the research and writing process will be collaborative and reflective. At each major step along the way we will discuss: What makes scholarly and professional work publishable or useful? What are the best ways to organize the research and writing process in a busy life? What are good ways to improve one's writing? How can we be more creative in analyzing data and making interesting arguments? How can collaboration improve the final product? Students will share their work at several points during the term and provide feedback on their peers' work as well.

2. Course Objectives

1. To help students write the best possible project paper
2. To help students learn to work effectively with others to review and critique research and writing
3. To encourage students to reflect critically on the organization of the research and writing process
4. To help students identify the most effective strategies for their own work

3. Course Materials

The required workbook is available at the GMU bookstore as well as online stores. You will find links to several journal articles in the weekly course content folders on the Blackboard site. In most cases you will have to login to the Mason digital databases to download them. Help on doing that can be found at library.gmu.edu.

Required Text

1. Wendy L. Belcher, *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks* (Sage 2009)

Recommended Texts

These are books I won't make you read but have been useful to me (and to many others) in managing the research, writing, and presenting processes:

1. Howard Becker, *Writing for the Social Sciences: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article* (University of Chicago Press 1996 or 2007 editions)
2. Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Clockwork Muse: A Practical Guide to Writing Theses, Dissertations, and Books* (Harvard University Press 1999)
3. David Allen, *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity* (Penguin 2001)
4. Joan Bolker, *Writing Your Dissertation in 15 Minutes a Day* (Owl Books 1998)
5. Cliff Atkinson, *Beyond Bullet Points* (Microsoft Press 2011)

4. Course Format and Process

This course is unique in your graduate career at Mason because it is not so much a course as it is infrastructure for helping you finish your capstone project paper. As such it does not rely much on lectures or extensive reading. Most of your time this semester will of course be spent on researching, writing, and then revising your project paper.

This course is also "asynchronous," the fancy term for "we will not have class all together at the same time." Instead, everyone can log in to the course to listen to lectures and make their posts to the discussion board when it is convenient for them (as long as they do so by the deadlines for each assignment).

Weekly Course Flow

The general flow of the course will be as follows:

- You will complete any required readings and lectures
- You will respond to the prompts on the *Writers Workshop* forum. Posts will be due at the end of the week (Sunday) by midnight.
- In many weeks you will have specific assignments to post or email.

Deadlines

One goal of the course is to provide a structure that will help students move predictably towards completion of their projects in a timely manner. One of the best tools for getting things done is to break up the various tasks in to a simple schedule of deadlines.

Here is yours for the term:

Feb 4 – Initial check in session with Professor Thrall to discuss your paper

Feb 7 - Draft paper proposal due on Writers Workshop, by email to writing partner, and via Blackboard for Professor Thrall by 10 p.m EST.

Feb 14 - Reviews of draft paper proposals due by email to writing partner, and via Blackboard for Professor Thrall by 10 p.m EST.

Feb 21 - Revised paper proposal due on Writers Workshop, by email to writing partner, and via Blackboard for Professor Thrall by 10 p.m EST

Mar 14 – First rough draft due by email to writing partner and uploaded to Blackboard by 10 p.m. EST.

Mar 21 - Review of rough drafts due by email to writing partner and uploaded to Blackboard by 10 p.m EST.

Apr 8 – Second rough draft of paper due by email to writing partner and uploaded to Blackboard by 10 p.m. EST.

Apr 15 – Review of rough drafts due by email to writing partner and uploaded to Blackboard by 10 p.m EST.

May 12 – Final drafts due by email to writing partner and uploaded to Blackboard by 10 p.m. EST.

5. Professor Help

My central role in this course is to provide advice and general guidance as you work on your papers. I am obviously not going to be an expert on your specific topics (most of the time) but I will do my best to help with anything from a research and writing point of view.

Recommended: Initial Check in by January 22

After you read through the entire syllabus and introductory materials, please shoot me an email. Your experience will be far better if you have a paper topic identified and a research question hammered out well before the term begins. This is especially true for those of you who are launching a new project rather than extending an existing project.

Required: Initial Check in by February 4 (before your proposal is due Feb 7)

Each student must schedule a brief appointment to talk to me about his or her plans (either in person or by phone/Skype). This will help us quickly figure out a plan of attack for you, answer various questions, and get to know each other. Ideally this will happen before the term begins or within the first two weeks.

Getting Help During the Term

Once we are underway my goal is to be as helpful as I can be. If you are local, feel free to set up a meeting. If you are not local or it would be more convenient to speak by phone or Skype, that is also fine.

How to Email Me

I get **a lot** of email from students in many different classes and programs. To make sure I see yours the email subject line should look like this: “Capstone – Last Name – Subject Matter”

For example:

Subject: Capstone – Jones – Problem finding a good topic

This way I will be sure to see and respond to your email!

(Please note: the same convention is very helpful when you send me and other people papers to read. If everyone calls it just “Capstone” then I can’t tell whose is whose!)

6. Evaluation

Requirements and grading are as follows:

Writers Workshop (25%)

The Writers Workshop is the discussion forum for the course. Students will respond each week to the prompts.

Writing Partner Feedback (25%)

Each of you will be assigned a writing partner for the term. Writing partners will be responsible for providing thoughtful and in depth feedback for each other. More information about your writing partner role is available in Assignments > Writing Partners on Blackboard.

- a. Review and critique of partner’s proposal and methods
- b. Review of partner’s rough draft

Capstone Paper – 50%

The primary emphasis of the course is the successful completion of your project paper. More information about the assignment is available in Assignments > Capstone Paper on Blackboard. Please note: late papers will drop a full letter grade for each day they are late.

Policy on Incompletes

I grant incompletes only rarely. If you plan to graduate in May you may not take an incomplete for this course. If you are graduating at a later point you may ask for an incomplete if you have an excellent reason.

7. A Note on Work Load

As a capstone course the goal is to support your independent research and writing. Thus the amount of time you will need to spend on readings and weekly discussion board responses is fairly minimal. The workbook reading will probably take you less than an hour each week, all lectures will be at most 15 minutes long, and the discussion board post will take you typically no more than a few minutes.

Most of your time will be spent on the research and writing – exactly how much time that takes will vary a great deal from student to student, depending on the topics chosen as well as individual work styles. You should expect, however, to commit a good deal of time each week to this project if you want to finish a high quality product on time.

8. Blackboard

Access to [MyMason](#) and GMU email are required to participate successfully in this course. Please make sure to update your computer and prepare yourself to begin using the online format BEFORE the first day of class. Check [the IT Support Center](#) website. Navigate to [the Student Support page](#) for help and information about Blackboard. In the menu bar to the left you will find all the tools you need to become familiar with for this course. Take time to learn each tool. Make sure you run a system check a few days before class. Become familiar with the attributes of Blackboard and online learning. To login in to the course:

1. Go to <http://mymason.gmu.edu>.
2. Login using your NETID and password.
3. Click on the ‘Courses’ tab.
4. Click on BIOD 790 (Fall 2015)

Technical Help

If you have difficulty with accessing Blackboard, please contact the ITU Support Center at 703.993.8870 or support@gmu.edu

If you have trouble with using the features in Blackboard, email courses@gmu.edu

9. University Policies & Information

Academic Integrity

Students must be responsible for their own work, and students and faculty must take on the responsibility of dealing explicitly with violations. The tenet must be a foundation of our university culture. [See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/distance>].

Honor Code

Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode>].

Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

MasonLive/Email

Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program

will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account. [See <https://thanatos.gmu.edu/masonlive/login>].

Patriot Pass

Once you sign up for your Patriot Pass, your passwords will be synchronized, and you will use your Patriot Pass username and password to log in to the following systems: Blackboard, University Libraries, MasonLive, myMason, Patriot Web, Virtual Computing Lab, and WEMS. [See <https://thanatos.gmu.edu/passwordchange/index.jsp>].

Responsible Use of Computing

Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html>].

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See <http://ods.gmu.edu>].

University Libraries

University Libraries provides resources for distance students. [See <http://library.gmu.edu/distance>].

Writing Center

The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing. [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>]. You can now sign up for an Online Writing Lab (OWL) session just like you sign up for a face-to-face session in the Writing Center, which means YOU set the date and time of the appointment! Learn more about the [Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#).

Counseling and Psychological Services

The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu>].

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), also known as the "Buckley Amendment," is a federal law that gives protection to student educational records and provides students with certain rights. [See <http://registrar.gmu.edu/privacy>].

Other Considerations

If there are any issues related to religious holidays, please inform the instructor the first week of class.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Readings & Lectures	Assignments
1 (01/21-01/25)	Course Welcome and Overview	<p>Lecture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Course Welcome and Overview <p>Required Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Belcher, Introduction, Week 1, Week 2 <p>Recommended Reading</p>	<p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce yourself - What do you want or plan to write about? - Concerns about the process
2 (01/28-02/01)	Finding a Good Topic	<p>Lectures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thrall's 8 Fold Process - Finding a Good Topic & Research Question <p>Required Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chenail, "Ten Steps for Conceptualizing and Conducting Qualitative Research Studies in a Pragmatically Curious Manner" - Belcher, Weeks 3, 4, 6 <p>Recommended Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Davis, "That's Interesting!" 	<p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Respond to at least three other people's topic ideas - Post a link to an article you think is really good and would like to be able to write
3 (02/04-02/08)	Literature Reviews	<p>Lecture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tips for Literature Reviews <p>Required Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Belcher, Week 5 - Knopf, ""Doing a Literature Review,"" 	<p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Post a link to an article with awesome methods and say why they are great <p>Deadlines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initial check in with Prof. Thrall due by Feb 4 - Draft topic proposal due Feb 7 to partner and professor and discussion board
4 (02/11-02/15)	Organizing the Research Process	<p>Lecture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizing Your Research <p>Required Reading</p>	<p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lit reviews post <p>Deadline:</p>

Week	Topic	Readings & Lectures	Assignments
		Reread Belcher, Week 1 Recommended Reading - Zerubavel, <i>The Clockwork Muse</i> - David Allen, <i>Getting Things Done</i> - Joan Bolker, <i>Writing Your Dissertation in 15 Minutes a Day</i>	- Writing partner reviews of proposals due to partner and professor by Feb 14
5 (02/18-02/22)	Writing Well, Part 1	Lecture - Writing Well Required Reading Belcher, Week 6 Van Evera, "How to Write a Paper," Johnson, "Writing for International Security: A Contributor's Guide" Recommended Reading - Becker, <i>Writing for the Social Sciences</i>	Discussion: - Writing strategies for the term Deadline: - Revised topic proposal due to partner and professor by February 21
6 (02/25-03/01)	Writing Well, Part 2	Required Reading Belcher, Week 7, Week 8	Discussion: - Week 6 plans and progress
7 (03/04-03/08)	Working on Projects	No readings or lectures this week	Discussion: - Week 7 progress and plans
8 (03/11-03/15)	Spring Break	No readings or lectures this week.	Discussion: - Week 8 plans and progress Deadline: - First rough draft due Mar 14
9 (03/18-03/22)	Working on Projects	No readings or lectures this week.	Discussion: - Week 9 plans and progress

Week	Topic	Readings & Lectures	Assignments
			Deadline: - Reviews of first rough drafts due Mar 21
10 (03/25- 03/29)	Working on Projects	No readings or lectures this week.	Discussion: - Week 10 plans and progress
11 (04/01-04/05)	Peer Review	Lecture - How to Review Required Reading: - Belcher, Week 9	Discussion: - Week 11 plans and progress
12 (04/08-04/12)	Revising, Editing, and Responding to Feedback	Lecture - How to Revise Required Reading: - Belcher, Week 10, Week 11, Week 12	Discussion: - Week 12 plans and progress Deadline: - Rough draft due April 8 to writing partner and professor
13 (04/15-04/19)	Working on Projects	No readings or lectures this week.	Discussion: - Week 13 plans and progress Deadline: - Writing partner reviews due Apr 15 to partner and professor
14 (04/22-04/26)	Working on Projects	No readings or lectures this week.	Discussion: - Week 14 plans and progress
15 (04/29-05/03)	Working on Projects	No readings or lectures this week.	Discussion: - Week 15 plans and progress - How did it all go; most useful and least useful tools, thoughts, tricks, etc?
16 (05/06-05/10)	Final Paper	No readings or lectures this week.	Deadline: - Final paper due May 12 by 10 pm EST

