

MA: Literature and MA: Literature & Composition Capstone Project (APP) Procedures

The capstone (Alternate Plan Paper) project for the MA in Literature and the MA in Literature & Composition is a long-term research project that demonstrates your mastery of the research and writing skills you've learned in your advanced study, as well as of mastery of your chosen subject matter. Students may choose to write either a traditional academic essay or a pedagogical project.

- Students who chose the **traditional academic essay** will conduct research on a text, author, rhetorical issue, or movement/tradition, in order to produce an article-length essay (around 15,000 words). This generally means an insightful interpretation of a focal text, contextualized by an extensive review of existing criticism on the topic. The argument need not be groundbreaking (as in a PhD dissertation), but should seek to join the critical conversation in a thoughtful and well supported way.
- A **pedagogical project** should similarly demonstrate extensive research in both pedagogy and literary or rhetorical analysis, applied to course design and instruction through lesson plans, classroom activities, and related materials. These practical elements should be accompanied by a cover statement explaining your goals and describing your use of ideas gleaned from secondary sources.

Planning ahead:

Your first steps should be completed *before* the term in which you want to complete the program. So, if you want to graduate in summer 2025, you should start on these steps by the middle of the spring 2025 semester. (We recommend spending an entire 15-week semester or full summer on the project, rather than a short 5-week summer session.)

- **Think** of some potential topics and/or texts you could work on intensively for an extensive project. Many students opt to use a paper from an earlier seminar class as a starting point, but the capstone paper should develop that work substantially (this route can also make selecting an adviser easier).
- **Communicate** with potential project advisers according to the topic(s) you're interested in researching; pitch your ideas and have some conversations about expectations on both sides, including timelines. In general, the chronological and geographical subfields and faculty would approximately line up as listed below (note that the faculty all have interests and expertise that are not confined by these kinds of boundaries, so this list doesn't cover every possible type of project we could competently advise):

Literature Faculty:

- Dr. Ed Avila – American literature (especially 20th-21st c.), multiethnic literatures (esp. Latinx), Marxism, cultural studies
- Dr. Kirsti Cole – rhetoric, gender studies, literary theory (various) [Note: Dr. Cole's last semester at MNSU will be SP 2025]
- Dr. Danielle Haque – global literatures (esp. contemporary Middle Eastern), American literature (esp. 20th- 21st c.), ecocriticism, postcolonial theory
- Dr. Melissa Purdue – late 18th-20th-century British literature (esp. Victorian, fin de siècle, and Modernist), gender studies, ecocriticism, Gothic literature

- Dr. Stephanie Rollag Yoon – young adult literature, digital literacy, climate literacy, Feminist pedagogy, culturally responsive writing pedagogy
- Dr. Gwen Westerman – American literature, multiethnic literatures (esp. Native American), contemporary poetry

- Dr. Liz Williamsen – earlier British literature (esp. medieval and early modern), drama, historicism, historical linguistics

Rhetoric and Composition Faculty

- Dr. Heather Camp – writing across the curriculum, writing and community engagement
- Dr. Kirsti Cole – writing pedagogy, activist and feminist rhetoric, gender studies, literary theory [Note: Dr. Cole’s last semester at MNSU will be SP 2025]
- Dr. Sarah Henderson Lee – multilingual writing teacher education, literacy practices of multilingual students, world Englishes and composition

- Dr. Kelly Moreland – writing instruction, writing program administration, digital/multimodal writing methods, feminist and embodied rhetoric

Final semester:

In your last semester in the program, you will complete the capstone project. Although ENG 694 is a 1-credit course, the scope of the project will require you to devote considerable time, so we recommend that a full-time student take no more than two other courses while working on the project.

- **Register** for one credit of ENG 694 Alternate Plan Paper for the semester that will be your final one in the program. You’ll need to ask your capstone adviser to put enrollment permission into the registration system, and then you’ll register for the section number attached to their name.
- **Organize** a schedule of deadlines and meetings with your adviser for the capstone term, making sure you’re getting whatever guidance and prodding you’ll need to ensure your successful completion of the capstone. Try to stick to it but renegotiate as needed.
- Go read all the relevant things and write, write, write.
Your particular project adviser will perhaps have a slightly different *modus operandi*, but you’ll find that out when you have your initial conversations.

Don’t forget to fill out the Application for Graduation and (later) the Recommendation for Awarding Degree and get adviser signatures. The DGS sends out a list of deadlines for such things at the beginning of the semester.