EMAC Capstone Frequently Asked Questions

What is the capstone project?
Often described as the culminating course, the capstone project offers an opportunity for students to engage the theories and practices from their EMAC coursework to develop an advanced creative and/or research project. Students develop their projects independently but have a faculty supervisor to guide the process and offer advice. Most faculty supervisors require regular meetings to discuss how students are progressing with their projects, but students have additional opportunities to get feedback on their projects during two workshops where all capstone students present status updates on their projects. At the end of the semester, students share their projects with the public in the EMAC Capstone Celebration event.

What should my capstone look like?
Capstones can take many forms, but media objects, social media projects, and research projects are most common. You will determine the form your capstone will take with your faculty supervisor. Regardless of the form your project takes, you should include some digital networked component that reflects the emerging media component of our program. This component should reflect an appreciation for theoretical concerns and sound design principles, including accessible design.

What kind of project is appropriate for my capstone?
Capstones typically blend some combination of creative and theoretical components, and the best capstone projects have a strong sense of exigence and audience. That sense of audience can take many forms, including future employers, graduate school application committees, and a more general public. Exigence may come from unanswered research questions, pressing social issues, developing trends, or technical challenges, among many others. Capstone projects typically reflect the student’s unique combination of coursework, interests and skills, so they vary widely. High-quality sample projects from past semesters include

- **Demure**, a fashion and lifestyle magazine targeting young Muslim American women, including social media outlets and a Kickstarter campaign (demureonline.com)
- **Down Right Fierce**, a documentary examining the competitive fighting game scene as it struggles to gain credibility (youtu.be/lznYJFYmq5k)
- **Langjam**, a website exploring how to visualize linguistic data to better document and preserve endangered languages (langjam.com)
- **Why We Left Home**, a site that tells immigrants’ stories and offers informational resources for them (whywlethome.com)
- **Feedbag Project**, a site that engages campus peer networks to educate them about food insecurity and sharing resources to address food insecurity on campus (feedbag-project.org)
- **Social Media Mood Ring**, a wearable device that changes color based on the emotional sentiment of your social media (http://paulsmalls.com/circuit-bending/social-media-mood-ring/)
How do I decide on a capstone project idea?
Consider the following questions:

- What in EMAC has captured my interest?
- What can I do to make a difference?
- What have I focused on while at UTD?
- What have I learned to do well?
- What do I want to show potential employers?
- What is missing in my portfolio?

While you may learn new skills while working on your project, consider what type of skill acquisition is reasonable for a semester-long project. Most of your capstone project should incorporate skills, techniques, or programs that you are already familiar with. Treat this project as the jewel of your portfolio. You are encouraged to discuss your options and ideas with fellow students and faculty. However, it is best to avoid approaching faculty and asking the dreaded question, “What should I do for my capstone?” While many faculty enjoy brainstorming, it helps if you have at least identified some constraints that could shape your project.

What does my faculty supervisor do?
Your faculty supervisor is responsible for submitting your final grade for the capstone course. They will provide guidance throughout your project and serve as your support and critic. It is not your faculty supervisor’s responsibility to:

- Determine your project idea, goals, objectives or timeline
- Remind you of meetings
- Check in with you to see how your project is progressing

It is the student’s responsibility to clarify all questions with their faculty supervisor.

Does the EMAC capstone course meet?
Yes. All EMAC capstone students meet three times a semester on Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. Two of those meetings will be workshops, where students will present progress and receive feedback on the project. The final meeting will be the end of semester Capstone Celebration. Faculty supervisors may require regular meetings in addition to the capstone workshops.

What are the capstone workshops?
Twice during the semester, you will meet in capstone workshops where you will practice talking about your project and get feedback on it. The first workshop (typically four or five weeks into the semester) gives you an opportunity to pitch your project and finesse how you frame it. Feedback in this workshop focuses on how to set your project up for success. The second workshop (usually about four weeks after the first) gives you an opportunity to share your work in progress and get constructive criticism about how to improve it.

What is Capstone Celebration?
At the end of the semester, we celebrate your hard work and completion of your EMAC degree with a public event where you share your project. Each semester, faculty nominate students for the outstanding capstone award. These students audition to determine which students will deliver formal presentations at the event. After the formal presentations, all students share their projects in a more
informal context in the showcase. During the showcase, you will have a station, and people will visit different stations, offering you the opportunity to chat about your project.

**Is capstone required to graduate?**
Yes. It is a major upper-level requirement for the EMAC degree plan.

**When should I take my capstone?**
You should take your capstone course during your last long semester at UT Dallas. If you plan to graduate during the summer, you should complete capstone during your final spring semester at UT Dallas. We do not offer capstones during the summer terms.

**Can I start working on my capstone project before I enroll in my capstone class?**
Students may begin work on their capstone projects prior to enrolling in the class. In fact, some projects may require the completion of research, IRB approval, and/or other preparatory deliverables prior to enrolling in the capstone course. However, you must have enough unfinished work so that you are continuing to work on your project throughout the semester you are enrolled in capstone. Your capstone cannot be completed prior to you enrolling in the course.

**How do I register for capstone (EMAC 4380)?**
You will complete the Capstone Application by March 30 for Fall 2016 enrollment. EMAC faculty will review each submission and pair each student with a faculty supervisor who is best suited for the project focus area. You and your academic advisor will receive an email confirming your assignment, at which point your advisor can register you in the course. You cannot register for capstone in Galaxy, so do not panic when you do not see the course in Coursebook.

**What is Senior Honors in Emerging Media and Communication (EMAC 4399)?**
Also referred to as “Major Honors,” you may pursue Senior Honors if you have a 3.5 GPA overall and a 3.75 GPA in your EMAC major coursework. Senior Honors capstones require a second reader and a paper beyond the regular capstone requirements. You must complete the Capstone Application whether you enroll in EMAC 4380 or EMAC 4399, but EMAC 4399 requires an additional form. Contact your academic advisor to determine your eligibility for Senior Honors and get the additional form.

**Can I fail capstone?**
Yes – and since it is required, you would have to retake the course to graduate.

If you have additional questions, contact emac@utdallas.edu or your academic advisor.