

## CAPSTONE PROJECTS:

Many of you have seen the seniors at our school scrambling around to finish their Capstone Projects in order to graduate from high school. In a way, you are lucky that you get a chance to get started on these earlier. Basically the research paper and presentation at the heart of Capstone is a performance piece that proves that you have the skills needed to get a high school degree and move on to college or technical schools. In the future, as more academic classes as you do research papers, the Capstone project might be where you rework a paper written previously for a science, history, English, foreign language, or elective class to make it more professional, or indeed, a research paper that has particular meaning and resonance for you.

Some of the papers that students presented in 2016 will be linked this summer to the Cross Currents website, where you can check them out.

## Prospectus: Thesis and Introduction Paragraph:

The prospectus is actually a warm-up for your paper. It should be at least 250 words in length and should be formatted exactly as your paper will be formatted. Include a standard heading. See the [MLA Style Guidelines](#) link that connects to Purdue Owl on the blog. In your prospectus, you will avoid the words “I, me, my and mine.” Although you chose the topic, you want to explain why other people might want to read it. This prospectus will be revised -- and maybe radically so -- as you continue with research and writing.

It is very important that you have a thesis, or claim for your paper as this will give you focus. You really cannot be writing about “feminism” for example. What exactly do you want to say about feminism, and why is it important? Your paper has to make an opinionated claim. There is no reason your thesis cannot be phrased as a question: *Is the standard grading method for secondary schools harmful or beneficial to student success?* Even if your paper is somewhat personal, you need to state a reason for your paper’s existence: *What are the important aspects of journalism? What do developing writers need to observe?* This is a good place to ask the questions that your paper will answer. This is also the place where you will describe clear subtopics, or sections of your paper that will support your premise. In a paper that is 10-15 pages long, it is probably best to have about three sections. These will guide your research as you move on, so it is important to think carefully about them and why these particular subtopics are the most important.. Breathe folks. In the scheme of things, this is a fairly short paper.

## Research, Documentation and Taking Notes:

Perhaps use this [graphic organizer](#) to gather information? Before writing your paper, you need to do research and actually *read* the articles or books that you use. For this high school paper, you should have at about five to ten sources. You should use the school library databases which you can browse on your own from the library website, so that your sources will be vetted for accuracy. (See the tab to the right that says “login information” to access the sources from home.) You will find that reading for research, however, is different than the kind of reading that you do for fun or when you have to study for an exam. You will need to develop this skill for college and post-graduate work, and there is every reason for you to get started on this now. You don’t need to memorize facts or think deeply about characters -- Here you will be reading quickly and comprehensively to find the supporting information you need without misreading or misunderstanding the point of the article. Also Remember: YOUR thoughts on this paper matter more than anyone else’s. ALSO: Keep it professional, not personal. Always avoid writing with first-person pronouns. No “I, me, my or mine”.

As you read, take notes and importantly, keep track of your sources. When writing, DO NOT PUT LARGE BLOCKS OF QUOTES IN YOUR PAPER FROM OTHER SOURCES. Your notes should summarize one or two key points the writer is making about your topic. Provide your own commentary as you synthesize this information into your paper. If there is a particularly salient quote or primary source graphic, use it and cite everything. In college and certainly in graduate school, you will have many books (yes many *books*) to read for one-semester classes, and your papers will depend on your understanding of these works. Many graduate and some undergraduate programs give you reading time exactly for this purpose. Please think of your summer break as a place to start this research process. You will begin writing your first drafts during the February break, so do not waste too much time.

Think about **keeping your paper local** -- use primary source information such as your own experiences, perhaps in your volunteer work, or through interviews with people who are expert in your topic.

Graphs and charts DO NOT count towards the total word count of your paper. These are ancillary supporting materials, and indeed should appear as appendices in your papers.

Be SURE TO LOAD YOUR SOURCES IMMEDIATELY INTO EASYBIB! You don’t want to lose track of them, even if you don’t use them later.