Your Senior Project

The Senior Project is both the capstone for your individual major and **evidence of its coherence and integration**. It is a sustained academic effort over the two semesters of your senior year that culminates in a public presentation.

Characteristics of a Successful Senior Project

Integration – A successful Senior Project builds on the courses and other experiences of the individual major and makes appropriate use of the knowledge, skills, and methodologies gained from studies and experiences in a variety of disciplines.

Development of Understanding – A successful Senior Project is an expression of the student's most current understanding of the focus of their individual major and the significant questions or topics in that field.

Coherence and Focus – A successful Senior Project has a sufficiently narrow focus to allow for in-depth treatment. Even projects with multiple parts must be shown through the Senior Project to have a coherent unifying focus.

Significant Academic Effort – A successful Senior Project, regardless of the format in which it is presented, is fundamentally an academic undertaking. This is manifested both in the level of relevance and rigor of the completed project.

Sense of Audience – A successful Senior Project has an audience beyond the student's advisors. All or a significant part of the project can be presented publicly in some appropriate forum.

Requirements and Expectations

- During your senior year, you will enroll in one course (IM 392) or a two-course sequence (IM 391, IM 392). These courses are independent seminars for study, research and reading, skill development, preliminary writing and/or other preparation and work related to your Senior Project.
- The semester prior to the IS course, you will work with your Individual Major Advisor to create a Senior Project Plan which must include the description and scope of the project, research agenda, the final product, an outline of your work plan, and the evaluation criteria and/or rubric for the project.
- If you use the IM 391 option, that course will be evaluated P/N by your Individual Major Advisor based on your progress through the two-semester plan and your readiness for the spring semester. Your entire Senior Project will be evaluated by your Individual Major Advisor in May with a letter grade.
- Your Senior Project might include a web site, which will not necessarily function as the Web Portfolio that is a requirement for the major.
- In late April or early May, before your Senior Project due date, you will present some part of your Senior Project to a public audience. The public presentation typically includes an introduction to the individual major and the Senior Project and an explanation of how they fit together.
- If your Senior Project includes an art exhibit, performance, publication in a newspaper or journal, or some other public component, it _might_ fulfill the public presentation requirement _if_ you are able to incorporate an explanation of your major and audience interaction as described above.
- Individual Majors may also consider presenting their Senior Projects together in a "symposium."

Checklist for Your Senior Project

When you submitted your Individual Major Proposal, you included a few possible ideas for your Senior Project. Now it is time to add specificity and detail. With your Individual Major Advisor and Individual Major Program leadership, identify your project goals, parameters, process, and format.

Second semester of your junior year (typically Spring):

❏ Attend the cohort meetings with the other Individual Majors. Continue to use the Individual Major [Checklist](). Continue to think about and add to your [Web Portfolio]().

❏ **IF** you and your Individual Major Advisor agree that your Senior Project will be substantial enough to require a two-semester sequence (9-12 hrs/week each semester), then before registration for Fall courses, Individual Major Program leadership, who will enroll you in IM 391. Work with your Individual Major Advisor to prepare a [Senior Project Plan]() for Fall semester. Share the plan with your Individual Major Program leadership. (There is no "approval process" for Senior Project Plans, but preparing and submitting them is a required step and ensures progress toward successful completion.)

❏ Before registration, review your approved proposal and the courses you outlined therein. Check in with your Individual Major Advisor about your plan for senior year. If you wish to alter your plan, fill out this [form]() so that the Individual Major Program Director can consider the request.

First semester of your senior year (typically Fall):

❏ Attend the cohort meetings with the other Individual Majors. Continue to use the Individual Major [Checklist](). Continue to think about and add to your [Web Portfolio]().

❏ If you are enrolled in IM 391, follow the plan that you created with your Individual Major Advisor.
   ❏ Check in regularly with your Individual Major Advisor to review progress, make sure your work is developing as designed, and set new and revised goals.

❏ Before registration for Spring courses, confirm with Individual Major Program leadership that you will enroll in IM 392.

❏ Work with your Individual Major Advisor to prepare a Senior Project Plan. [Use this template]() to get started. Consider whether it is appropriate to request WRI designation for your section of IM 392. (If you are studying off-campus in the Fall, maintain regular communication with your Individual Major Advisor in order to work on the plan for IM 392.)

❏ Share the Senior Project Plan with Individual Major Program leadership. (There is no "approval process" for Senior Project Plans, but preparing and submitting them is a required step and ensures progress toward successful completion.)

❏ Use your last meeting of the Fall semester to review your Spring week-to-week work plan, reaffirm or revise your goals for the project, and set up Spring meetings with your Individual Major Advisor.
   ❏ Confirm the deadline for submission of the completed project.
   ❏ Confirm your agreement about the format of the Senior Project, the structure and timing of the public presentation, the scope of the Web Portfolio.
   ❏ Confirm your criteria for evaluation. Agree on expectations for satisfactory progress.
   ❏ Share any significant project revisions with Individual Major Program leadership.

Interim of your senior year:

❏ Update/upgrade your Web Portfolio, review your research, revise writing, organize resources, schedule interviews, etc.

Second semester of your senior year (typically Spring):

❏ Make time for your Senior Project! Reserve time in your schedule each week – 9-12 hrs/wk (at least the amount that you would devote to a 300-level course for preparation, reading, class time, "homework," research, writing).
   ❏ Attend regular meetings with your Individual Major Advisor and your R&I Librarian. Use the time to review your progress, discuss readings, critique your work, troubleshoot problems, and plot next steps.
   ❏ Identify other faculty and consult with them about the role they might have in support of your project. Schedule meetings as needed.
   ❏ Attend the Senior Cohort meetings with the other Individual Majors for in-progress sharing and problem solving.
❏ Completing your Senior Project is a substantial task. It's one of the four major writing assignments that you will complete as part of your individual major. Recognize the work involved and enlist support from the writing resources available on campus.
   ❏ Review the OLE Core requirements for Writing and especially for Writing in the Major.
   ❏ Consult regularly with Individual Major Program leadership and with your Individual Major Advisor. Use Google Docs so that you can easily share your progress and get feedback.
   ❏ Visit the Writing Desk while writing and revising.
❏ If your project includes a performance, exhibit, or other ephemeral achievement that can't be physically handed to your Individual Major Advisor, make appropriate arrangements for evaluation of that part of the project.
❏ Plan ahead for the public presentation of your Senior Project.
   ❏ Notify the Individual Major Program leadership of your public presentation time and location
   ❏ Work with our AAA [currently Lynda Maus] to make arrangements (room reservations, technological support, refreshments, program/invitations).
   ❏ Invite an appropriate audience (family, friends, classmates, professors whose classes played a role in your major, supervisors, mentors, etc.) and, of course, your Individual Major Advisor and Individual Major Program leadership!
❏ Deliver your Public Presentation.
❏ Submit your Senior Project and your Web Portfolio to your Individual Major Advisor by the first week of May so that your Individual Major Advisor can submit your grade for IM 392 in SIS and the Individual Major Program Director can certify that you have completed all the requirements of your major.

Reminders and Suggestions:

Use your faculty resources
Consult with your Individual Major Advisor, your Research & Instruction Librarian, and others when defining your project, finding resources, choosing an appropriate methodology or work plan, setting expectations for the final product, and for support along the way. These conversations will help you get started or get moving if you get stuck. Your best guarantee for success in your Senior Project is to have regular and frequent communication and interaction with your faculty and library advisors.

Focus
The purpose of your Senior Project is not to encompass the whole of your chosen field, but to demonstrate the kind of work that can be done in your major, drawing on the tools and knowledge you have achieved in your area of study. Having a clearly defined and focused Senior Project will allow you to do the kind of in-depth, sophisticated work expected in a capstone, integrative experience. Examples:

- "The Psychedelic Resurgence: Ketamine Therapy for Mental Health and Addiction" –391, 392 (Adams '24, Addiction Studies)
- "Are They Safe?" – 392 (Morera '24, Inclusivity in the Performing Arts)
- "Social media/Design firm for Small Businesses (Business Proposal)" – 392 (Jensen '23, Entrepreneurial Business and Design

Audience
Keep your eventual audience in mind, both for your written work and your public presentation. Who else will be interested in, or benefit from, your work? Remember that there are potential audiences on campus, in the Northfield community, in the schools, the churches, and in local, county, and state government.

Write early and often
Despite the semester division, the year is not separated into "learning" and "product"; you will be synthesizing information from the beginning. When you read, make notes; when you have an idea or question, write it down; when you find an interesting source, make an annotation; when a good phrase, statement, or argument occurs to you, write it out. Go ahead and write sections that can be revised or incorporated later into your final project. Use an intellectual journal, artist's notebook, or whatever suits you, to track the development of your thinking and the progress of your work.

Give yourself progress markers
It can be helpful to think of your large project as an accumulation of smaller efforts. Plan your work in segments that make sense to you, so you can tell you are making progress. Set intermediate deadlines in each semester to guard against finding yourself overwhelmed near the end. Track your progress and the development of your ideas – in your Web Portfolio, an intellectual journal, artist's notebook, or some other medium.

Don't isolate yourself
Attend the important and useful sessions that are scheduled for your cohort of Individual Majors. Get to know other students. Talk with them about your project. Compare struggles, frustrations, and triumphs. If you are stalled or stymied, get help!