

Information on the Capstone Project Requirement

The capstone project (formerly divided between theses and projects) is an integral component of the HUC-JIR School of Jewish Communal Service program, as it gives students the valuable experience of delving into an issue in depth and completing a work at the masters level. This guide provides information on what is required and how to select a topic. This information is also available in the Capstone Project Requirement section of <http://www.huc.edu/academics/catalog/sjcs.shtml> and on the SJCS Sakai site.

Students begin thinking about possible topics for their capstone project in the Research Methods class in the spring of their first year. They submit their formal proposal in their second summer, and they finish their projects one month before graduation. Students receive 3 credits for work on their projects (1.5 credits each in fall and spring semesters of the second year: CS 900A, B).

All capstone projects should involve some original research (such as surveys, interviews, observations, or analysis of existing data) and some review of relevant literature and should have some practical application. While the traditional format for the capstone project is a thesis (generally an extended essay of at least 50 pages), several years ago the requirement was expanded to allow students to present their research in a non-traditional format, such as a curriculum, a website, a resource guide, or a program evaluation.

Students are allowed to work in pairs or small groups. In the case of a collaborative capstone project, each student is expected to do work equivalent to that of an individual thesis/project.

Students are encouraged to distribute their capstone project to relevant audiences and/or submit it for publication in the *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* or other venue.

Topics

Topics can relate to anything about Jews or Jewish agencies that might be of interest to Jewish communal professionals. Students are encouraged to browse through past theses/projects to get a sense of completed work as well as for inspiration for a possible topic. Most past SJCS capstone projects are available in the Frances-Henry library. Theses are shelved behind the circulation desk, and non-traditional projects are on reserve. In addition, some theses are in the stacks and can be checked out.

Examples of past **thesis** topics:

Parents of newly Orthodox Jews
Alcoholism in the Jewish community
Jewish singles and JDate.com
Synagogue-Federation relations
Iranian Jews in Los Angeles

Examples of past **project** topics:

A curriculum on community relations

A guide to Jewish singles programs designed for Jewish singles in Los Angeles

A guide for new Hillel workers

Program evaluation of an agency's in-service training

An examination of the nexus between spirituality and Jewish communal service

Format

The written product should have the following format:

Title Page (see sample on Sakai), including:

[Title]

[Author's name]

“[Thesis/Project] submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Jewish Communal Service in cooperation with [student's other program as applicable, e.g., “the University of Southern California School of Social Work”]”

“Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion”

“April 2011” [completion date]

Table of Contents

Abstract (250-300 words)

Acknowledgements

Content (double spaced). Suggested format for a traditional thesis:

Introduction and literature review (may be together or separate)

Methodology

Chapters of findings (generally 2-5)

Discussion, conclusion, implications for the field of Jewish communal service

Bibliography of works cited

The recommended format for citations is in-text references in parentheses, rather than footnotes, e.g., (Cohen, 1995) or (Levine 2007) and a bibliography at the end. For additional notes, footnotes or endnotes are acceptable. Turabian (1996) provides a good guide on format issues:

Turabian, Kate. 1996. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 6th revised edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Abstract

The abstract (250-300 words) is designed to tell potential readers about the project. Abstracts are included in the list of capstone projects published each year by the SJCS, which is shared with key Jewish leaders and organizational representatives, alumni, and friends and supporters of the School.

Timeline

Capstone projects are due **in final form one month before graduation**. To ensure that this deadline is met, all students are expected to follow this timeline:

Timeline for 2010-11	
Submit written proposal to SJCS Assistant	July 16
Advisor assignments are made, advisor approves the proposal	July 30
Complete first stage of research, agreed upon with advisor (e.g. literature review, interviews, survey creation...)	October 8
Complete research	November 26
Thesis/project halfway point presentations to second-year students, first-year students, and selected faculty	TBA – likely December 2
Complete data analysis, submit chapters to advisor	December through February
First complete draft due to advisor	February 25
Pre-final draft due to advisor	March 25
Final draft due with forms signed to SJCS Assistant	April 14
Title and abstract due via e-mail to SJCS Assistant	April 14
Oral presentations of thesis/project to SJCS Advisory Board	TBA, during month before graduation

As part of the proposal, students create an even more detailed schedule. Students are expected to meet with the advisor regularly. It is the student's responsibility to schedule meetings with the advisor and to make sure to stick to the timeline.

All second-year students will make presentations about their research twice: once in early December and once after capstone projects are completed. At the first gathering, each student will speak for 5-7 minutes on his/her general progress and preliminary findings and concerns, with time for peer feedback. Presentations should be well prepared and should meet the time constraints. Handouts or PowerPoint presentations are encouraged. The second

gathering will be in the presence of SJCS Advisory Board members and other interested parties. Each student will speak for 3-5 minutes on his/her final product, and those present will ask questions. These presentations should be spoken (rather than read) and should be well rehearsed.

What to turn in to whom one month before graduation

Turn in the following items to the School of Jewish Communal Service assistant:

1. E-mail with title, author, and abstract in the body of the email and your capstone project as a PDF attachment. You can find freeware programs online to convert a Word document to PDF.
2. CD-ROM with your capstone project in PDF format.
3. Two hard copies printed single-sided to be bound and placed in the LA and Cincinnati libraries.
4. Final Thesis Approval Form signed by your advisor – found on Registrar's website
(<http://www.huc.edu/registrar/docs/Final%20Thesis%20Approval%20Form.pdf>).

You should also check with your advisor about whether he/she would prefer a hard copy or an electronic version. Make sure to back up a copy for yourself.

Advising

Each student or group will be assigned an advisor from the HUC faculty (full-time or adjunct). Students may express a preference for a particular faculty member in their proposals. Students are also encouraged to select a secondary advisor from the HUC faculty or elsewhere (a USC professor, a field mentor, etc.).

Statistical analysis

Students whose projects require statistical analysis are encouraged to consult with USC statistics faculty or graduate students. In addition, Deborah Oh, Assistant Professor of Statistics and Research Methodology at California State University Los Angeles will be available for individual consultation (doh2@exchange.calstatela.edu), subject to approval by Richard Siegel.

Research costs

Research that requires travel or incurs other expenses may be eligible for support from the School of Jewish Communal Service. In the past, agency-related research has received subvention from the agency. **If a student needs financial support for research costs, he/she should submit a request including full budget to the SJCS Director at the time the proposal is submitted.**

Format for SCJS capstone project proposals

Proposals should be 8-12 pages long and should include the following components:

- a. Working title
- b. Author
- c. (Optional: Advisor preference)
- d. Introduction: statement of research questions, why they are important, why you chose this topic.
- e. Literature review: discussion of at least 10 relevant articles, books, or chapters, how your research fits in and fills gaps in the literature, and how you plan to use them (e.g., to make your case for the need for a program, as background information about the history of your topic, etc.).
- f. Proposed methods: how you plan to research this topic, goals of each method you plan to use, how they help you answer your research questions.
- g. Expected results: based on anecdotal observations, previous studies, or your own pilot studies.
- h. Practical applications: how your research might impact the field of Jewish Communal Service, whom you expect to distribute it to.
- i. Format: what you expect your final product to look like (traditional thesis, resource guide, business plan, theatrical performance, etc.).
- j. Outline: expected outline of the final product.
- k. Detailed timeline: for conducting your research, reviewing the relevant literature, analyzing data, and writing up your findings (e.g., if you have a survey, when will you draft it, pre-test it, edit it, administer it, and analyze it?).
- l. Bibliography: list all books and articles cited in the proposal. Choose a format for in-text citations (e.g., “Windmueller 1996:481” OR “Benor, 2008: 18”) and for bibliographic information, and make sure your whole bibliography is consistent.

In addition, if students plan to deal with human subjects (rather than existing data), they are asked to read the **Guidelines for conducting ethical research** and include an additional section in your proposal:

- m. Access and ethical issues: how you plan to gain access to the community, ethical issues you expect may arise and how you plan to deal with them. Also, please attach the consent form(s) you plan to use.

Guidelines for conducting ethical research for HUC-JIR SJCS capstone projects

As students prepare their project proposals, they should think through the ethical issues surrounding your research project, including:

Minimizing risks: As a researcher, you want to minimize the risks and maximize the benefits to those who participate in your study. Can you think of any ways that your research participants might face loss of status, embarrassment, or stigmatization because they are participating in your study? Are there other potential risks you can think of? If so, you should go through the proposal process with the USC Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Research Subjects: <http://www.usc.edu/admin/provost/oprs/>.

Informed consent: All participants in your research – whether or not you interview them – should know what they are getting into. You should inform them how much of a time commitment participation will entail, and you should give them basic information about what you are studying. All participants should sign a consent form, and parental consent is required for minors. See a sample consent form below. If for some reason you believe that deception is necessary for your research, you must go through the USC IRB.

Assurance of participant privacy and data confidentiality: One way that research participants are wronged is through the violation – intentional or unintentional – of their privacy. How will you protect the privacy of your participants? Will you use pseudonyms in your project and any papers you publish based on your research? Will you remove any identifying details? Will you make sure not to disclose names of participants to anyone? In your consent form, you should let your participants know how you plan to protect their privacy.

If you can think of other ethical issues, be sure to mention them in your proposal and discuss them with your advisors.

Sample CONSENT FORM for Ethnographic Research Involving Human Subjects
[change bold parts]

CONSENT FORM

DESCRIPTION: You are asked to participate in a research study about **your topic**. The researcher, **your name**, wants to learn **your research question**. **Brief description of your study**. You are asked to **be interviewed or observed...** as part of this study. The identity of all participants will remain confidential - no names or other identifying information will be disclosed.

FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, CONTACT: **Your name, phone #, e-mail**, masters candidate in Jewish Communal Service and **Social Work or Public Administration...** at Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion and the University of Southern California.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: There are no risks associated with this study (**if you believe there are risks you should go through the USC Institutional Review Board**). Benefits include **contributing to scholarship about the Jewish people....**

TIME INVOLVEMENT: **Interviews / participation...** may involve **20 minutes / a few hours over the course of several months / none** of your time.

PAYMENTS: There will be **no** payment for participation in this study.

(If you plan to tape): AUDIO TAPING: The tapes will be heard by **your name and anyone else who might hear them**. The tapes will remain in **whose** possession and possibly used for future studies.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS: If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand that your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact – anonymously, if you wish – Richard Siegel, Director of the HUC-JIR School of Jewish Communal Service: rsiegel@huc.edu, 3077 University Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90007, or toll-free at 800-899-0925.

Please sign and date: I give consent **to be audiotaped / observed for this study:**

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

If participant is under 18, a parent must sign:

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

The extra copy of this consent form is for you to keep.

Optional:

May I contact you with further questions? If so, please write your phone # or e-mail address:

PHONE # _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

Thank you for participating.

Sample CONSENT FORM for Surveys

INFORMATION: PLEASE READ

DESCRIPTION: You are asked to complete a survey about **your topic**. The researcher, **your name**, wants to learn **your research question. More detail on your study (mention that it's for your Master's Project)**. Your identity will remain confidential - no names or other identifying information will be disclosed.

FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, CONTACT: **Your name, phone #, e-mail address**, masters candidate in Jewish Communal Service and **Social Work/Public Administration/...** at Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion and the University of Southern California.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: The survey may involve **20 minutes** of your time.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS: Please understand that your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact – anonymously, if you wish – Richard Siegel, Director of the HUC-JIR School of Jewish Communal Service: rsiegel@huc.edu, 3077 University Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90007, or toll-free at 800-899-0925.

By completing this survey, you give permission for your responses to be included in the study and any published results.

You may keep this information page.

(You might want to put something like this at the end of the survey):

May I contact you with further questions? If so, please write your phone # or e-mail address:

PHONE # _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

Thank you for participating.