

# Capstone Planning

## DCM 321



### COURSE SYLLABUS

Version: *Winter 2020*

**Meets:** January 7<sup>th</sup> – February 4<sup>th</sup>  
**Day:** Tuesdays  
**Location:** Harper College Campus  
**Time:** 6:00 –9:15 PM

**Faculty:** **Kevin F. Downing, Ph.D.**

**Office:** 14 East Jackson Boulevard Suite 1400  
**Hours:** By Appointment  
**Email:** [kdowning@depaul.edu](mailto:kdowning@depaul.edu)

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## Course Description

Students will research a theoretical or practical problem they find meaningful to address and that follows from the goals that define their major. After identifying a question to be addressed, students will use their research skills to design the methods of investigation or application. Students will finalize a proposal that explains the importance of their question, identifies sources and describes the final product to be submitted. The proposal builds on a student's research methods skills. Students will initiate their project using practices of project management to ensure the subsequent Capstone Project is accomplished with distinction. (2 credit hours)

## Learning Outcomes:

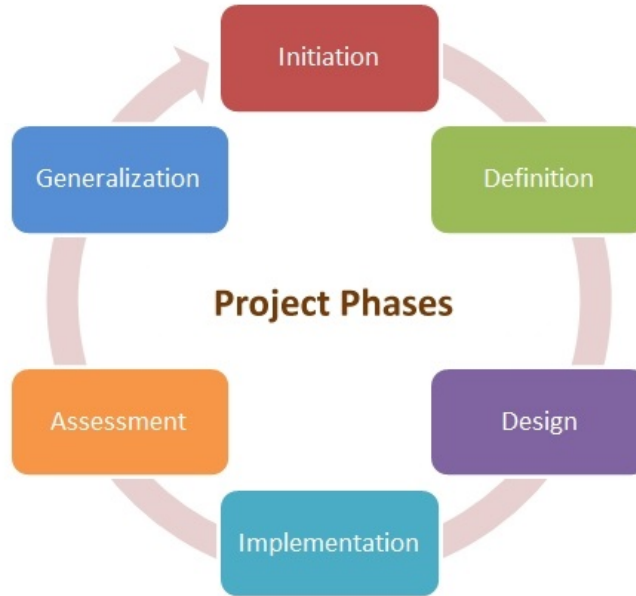
Upon successful completion of this course, all students are expected to have demonstrated the following abilities:

- Investigates a relevant area to conduct research in one's area of professional specialization, develops project outcomes, and generates an actionable proposal.
- Demonstrates the ability to apply appropriate research methods to one's area of professional specialization to achieve project outcomes.
- Can apply project management to implement a research project in one's area of professional specialization.

## Learning Strategies and Resources

This course helps you frame and advance your independent research through 5 class sessions that employ readings, multimedia resources (online videos and multimedia), discussions, and weekly individual and/or group exercises. The core purpose of this *Capstone Planning* course is to guide you through the preparatory steps involved in designing and carrying out a *Capstone Project*, the foremost research endeavor of your degree.

A project management cycle will be employed in *Capstone Planning* incorporating six phases: 1) *initiation phase* involving investigating and selecting a problem, issue, or practice area through review of relevant scholarly literature, 2) a *definition phase* that concisely explains the character and scope of the problem, issue, or practice to be addressed, such as a statement of project goal(s), research question(s), and expected artifact(s), 3) a *design phase* that establishes a research approach and designates an appropriate method(s), 4) an *implementation phase* involving practical application of the proposed methods (such as data collection tools), 5) an *assessment phase* that critically analyzes the data, results, and/or product of the project, and 6) a *generalization phase* that provides conclusions, public presentation and examines the practical applications of the project in broader circumstances. You will concentrate on the first four phases of the cycle in *Capstone Planning*.



**Course Prerequisites:**

- Research Methods
- A good sense of your area of career specialization

**Required Textbook:**

Robson, Colin. *How to do a research project: a guide for undergraduate students*. Blackwell, 2007.

Paperback: 172 pages  
 Publisher: Wiley-Blackwell; 1 edition (January 10, 2007)  
 Language: English  
 ISBN-10: 1405114908  
 ISBN-13: 978-1405114905

\*Available at discount outlets.

**Project Management Website**

<https://www.smartsheet.com/blog/demystifying-5-phases-project-management>

**Learning Deliverables**

Assignment 1. (Topic Rationale) (100 Points)	Develop a ½ page summary of the rationale for choosing your research project topic and place it in the D2L Dropbox. Bring a hardcopy to class.
Assignment 2. (Citations I) (100 Points)	Find, cite and briefly summarize (4) scholarly articles around your topic.
Assignment 3. (Proposal Draft) (150 Points)	Complete a <i>Capstone Project</i> Proposal Draft that includes project management phases.

Assignment 4. (Citations II) (100 Points)	Find, cite and briefly summarize (4) additional scholarly articles around your topic.
Assignment 5. (Methods Considerations) (100 Points)	Write a ¾ page summary of 1) the theories involved in your study, 2) the question(s) involved in your study, 3) the key variables involved in your study, 4) the populations, individuals and/or items you will need to investigate, and 5) the materials required in your study
Assignment 6. (Methods Approach) (100 Points)	Submit a 1-page description of your chosen Research Methods for your Artifact.
Assignment 7. (Presentation) (100 Points)	Prepare a 5-minute PowerPoint (or similar) presentation of your <i>Capstone Project</i> plan.
Assignment 7. (Project Proposal Draft) (200 points)	Finalize your <i>Capstone Project</i> Proposal draft taking into consideration the methods developed in weeks 3 and 4.
Assignment 9. (Next Steps Summary). (50 Points)	Place a ½ page summary of the progress you expect to make on the implementation of your <i>Capstone Project</i> in the next 5 weeks

## Assessment of Learning

Please consult the Assessment and Grading Rubric (on D2L) form listed above for the convention your instructor will use in this course.

	<b>Assessment Considerations</b>
Assignment 1. (Topic Rationale) (100 Points)	Identification of relevant question to career area, meaningful connection to career problem solving and advancement
Assignment 2. (Citations I) (100 Points)	Conformity of your references to the APA style as well as attention to quality and relevance to your research area
Assignment 3. (Proposal Draft) (150 Points)	Clear expression of problem statement, relevance to career specialization, demonstration of the value of study, and project management phases
Assignment 4. (Citations II) (100 Points)	Conformity of your references to the APA style as well as quality and their relevance to your research area
Assignment 5. (Methods Considerations) (100 Points)	Identification of theories, variables, study objects, and materials
Assignment 6. (Methods Approach) (100 Points)	Identification and design of optimal methodology to pursue research objective(s)/question(s).
Assignment 7. (Presentation) (100 Points)	Clear discussion of project rationale, question, methods and expected outcomes
Assignment 7. (Project Proposal Draft) (200 points)	Revised and clearer expression of problem statement, relevance to career specialization, and demonstration of the value of study, and detailed methodology

Assignment 9. (Next Steps Summary). (50 Points)	Detailed timeline for implementation of project including data collection strategy for remaining weeks of the quarter.
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## Grading Policies and Practices

To complete the course, students must fulfill each of the assignments as described in the course and submit them to the instructor by the assigned deadline. In addition, students must participate in class discussions and by interacting with fellow classmates as appropriate. Points will be deducted for late work that has not been exempted with the instructor (i.e., for medical or significant personal reasons).

### Course Grading Scale

Grading Scale	Percentage	Verbal Descriptor
<b>A</b>	100-93%	Excellent
<b>A-</b>	92-90%	
<b>B+ -&gt; B-</b>	89-80%	Very Good
<b>C+ -&gt; C-</b>	79-69%	Satisfactory
<b>D+ -&gt; D-</b>	68-60%	Poor
<b>F</b>	< 60%	Unacceptable

### DePaul University Rubric for Letter Grades

- A** The instructor judged the student to have accomplished the stated objectives of the course in an EXCELLENT manner.
- B** The instructor judged the student to have accomplished the stated objectives of the course in a VERY GOOD manner.
- C** The instructor judged the student to have accomplished the stated objectives of the course in a SATISFACTORY manner.
- D** The instructor judged the student to have accomplished the stated objectives of the course in a POOR manner.
- F** The instructor judged the student NOT to have accomplished the stated objectives of the course.

**IN** Temporary grade indicating that, following a request by the Student, the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs and the Instructor have given permission for the student to receive an incomplete grade.

The Pass/Fail grading option in the course must be requested in writing during the first week of the quarter.

**Incomplete (IN) Grade:** This process follows university [policy](#).

A student who encounters an unusual or unforeseeable circumstance that prevents her/him from completing the course requirements by the end of the term may request a time extension to complete the work.

- The student must formally initiate the request by submitting the [Contract for Issuance of Incomplete Grade](#) form (via email, word doc), no later than week 10 (or prior to the final week of a shorter-term course).
- The instructor has discretion to approve or not approve the student's request for an IN grade.
- The instructor has discretion to set the deadline for completion of the work, which may be earlier but no later than two quarters (not counting Summer term).
- The instructor may not enter an IN grade on behalf of a student without a completed and agreed upon contract.
- The student is alerted that IN grades are not considered by Financial Aid as evidence of satisfactory academic progress.

In order to qualify, the student must have:

1. satisfactory record in the work already completed in the course;
2. encountered unusual or unforeseeable circumstances, which prevent him/her from completing the course requirements before the end of the term; and
3. applied to the instructor and to the Assistant Dean for permission to receive the IN. The incomplete will expire at the end of the following semester. If the work is not complete, the student will receive a failing grade.

Pass/Fail Exclusions

You may not use the [Pass/Fail](#) grading option if you are using this course to meet Liberal Studies Program (LSP) requirements. Likewise, if this course is taken to meet a requirement in your major (including intended and pre-majors), minor, and/or certificate (including intended and pre- minors/certificates) you may not use the Pass/Fail option.

## Course Policies

### Academic Integrity

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and

academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your [Student Handbook](#) for further details.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a major form of academic dishonesty involving the presentation of the work of another as one's own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following:

- The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else's.
- Copying of any source in whole or part with only minor changes in wording or syntax, even with acknowledgement.
- Submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment that has been prepared by someone else. This includes research papers purchased from any other person or agency.
- Resubmitting one's own previous work from a different course or college, without the permission of the current instructor.
- The paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgement.

Plagiarism, like other forms of academic dishonesty, is always a serious matter. If an instructor finds that a student has plagiarized, the appropriate penalty is at the instructor's discretion.

### **DePaul University Incomplete Policy**

The intent of the Incomplete grade is to allow students extra time to complete their final assignments. This need arises because, in the closing weeks of the course, they have an event of significant magnitude that adversely affects their ability to complete the course, e.g. serious illness, death in the family, overseas deployment, or natural disaster.

You must request an incomplete grade in writing two weeks before the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades will be considered only after you have satisfactorily completed at least 75 percent of the coursework, and you have such an unexpected, uncontrollable event that prevents you from completing your course. Do not assume that you will qualify for an incomplete. Students who are failing the course at the point where they request an incomplete will not receive one, nor will they be granted after the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades are given at the discretion of the instructor.

If you do receive permission from the instructor to take an incomplete in the course, you will be required to complete a contract with the instructor, specifying how you will finish the missing work within the next two quarters (excluding summer). See the [Incomplete Grade Contract Form](#).

Undergraduate and graduate students will have up to two quarters to complete an incomplete. However, an instructor may choose to provide an interval much shorter than the maximum. At the end of the second quarter (excluding summer) following the term in which the incomplete grade was assigned, remaining incompletes will automatically convert to "F" grades.

### **For Students Who Need Accommodations Based on the Impact of a Disability**

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussion will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most reasonable accommodation based on your needs, contact your instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week or two of the course). Please be sure to contact the following office for support and additional services:

Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD)  
Lincoln Park Campus: Student Center 370. (773) 325-1677  
Loop Campus: Lewis Center 1420. (312) 362-8002  
[csd@depaul.edu](mailto:csd@depaul.edu)

### **Copyright and Student Privacy**

In accordance with [DePaul's Acceptable Use Policy](#), commentary and materials within SNL Online classes shall not be copied, reproduced or published elsewhere without the express written consent of individuals involved.

### **Protection of Human Subjects**

For more information see: <http://research.depaul.edu/>

Demonstrating the acquisition of competences in this course can involve "interactions"—interviewing and or observing other people—discussing those interviews or observations with other class members and writing them up in one or more final report(s). As such, these activities qualify as "research" with "human subjects" and are subject to University and Federal guidelines. Because it takes place in the context of this course, your research is exempt from approval by the School of Continuing and Professional Studies's Local Review Board only under the following conditions:

1. The information you collect is EXCLUSIVELY for the purpose of classroom discussion and will NOT be used after the term is over. If there is any possibility that you will EVER use it in further research or for publication, you must obtain approval from the Local Review Board before you begin.
2. You assess and ensure that no "harm"—physical, mental, or social—does or could result from your interviews and/or observations or your discussion and/or reports.
3. The privacy and confidentiality of those that you interview or observe must be protected. Unless you receive specific permission, in writing, from the person(s) you interview or observe, please change their names, and make sure that their identity cannot be readily ascertained from the information you provide.
  - a. If you want to use real names and relationships, they must sign an "informed consent" document. For information on creating an "informed consent document" see, for example, [Informed Consent](#)



## About the Instructor

*Kevin F. Downing*, Professor – DePaul University

Dr. Downing is a Professor and Associate Dean at DePaul University's college for adult learners, the School of Continuing and Professional Studies. His research interests include the investigation of fossil mammals, fossil corals, and online science learning practices. He is the author of numerous publications in geology, paleontology and science education and is the co-author of the book, *Online Science Learning: Best Practices and Technologies*. Dr. Downing received B.S. degrees in Astronomy and Geology (University of Illinois-Champaign), an M.S.T. in Geology (University of Florida-Gainesville), and Ph.D. in Geosciences/Evolutionary Biology and Ecology (University of Arizona, Tucson).



## Class Schedule

Project Phase	Week	Topic	Learning Activities
<b>Initiation</b> Investigating and selecting a problem, issue, and/or innovation area through review of relevant scholarly literature.	<b>1</b> (1/7)	<b>Getting Started on Your Capstone Project Proposal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Revisiting Research Methods</li> <li>❖ Review of the Learning Goals and Character of the Capstone project</li> <li>❖ Capstone project (Examples)</li> <li>❖ Strategies for Finding Knowledge Gaps</li> <li>❖ Exercise: Developing a List of Potential Research Issues and Artifacts</li> <li>❖ Narrowing Your Themes for the Capstone project Issue/Artifact</li> <li>❖ Small Group Discussion on Selecting a Capstone project</li> <li>❖ Getting Scholarly Sources from the Library: A Refresher</li> </ul>
<b>Definition</b> Concisely explaining the character and scope of the problem, issue, or practice to be addressed, such as a statement of project goal(s), research question(s), and expected artifact(s).	<b>2</b> (1/14)	<b>Establishing the Goals, Question(s), and Parameters of Your Capstone project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Review of WK 2 Assignments</li> <li>❖ Exercise: Developing Your Research Question</li> <li>❖ Exercise: Peer Review of Capstone Project Proposal Drafts</li> <li>❖ Required Formats for a Journal-Style Article and Your Artifact</li> <li>❖ Small Group Discussion: Developing Your Idea(s) Further = Artifact design</li> <li>❖ Project Management Planning Approach</li> </ul>
<b>Design I</b> Establishing a research approach and designating an appropriate method(s).	<b>3</b> (1/21)	<b>Designing a Capstone project Methodology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Review of WK 3 Assignments</li> <li>❖ Relation of Your Research Endeavor’s Purpose to Project Design</li> <li>❖ Research Traditions and Methodologies/Data Collection/Statistical Analysis</li> <li>❖ Exercise: Designing Your Research Method(s)/Choosing Your Approach</li> </ul>
<b>Design II</b> Building your research tool and planning implementation	<b>4</b> (1/28)	<b>Collecting Your Data and Generating an Artifact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Review of WK 4 Assignments</li> <li>❖ Practicalities of Data Collection</li> <li>❖ Exercise: Methods “Workshop”</li> <li>❖ Final Methods Plan for Your Capstone Project</li> </ul>
<b>Implementation</b> Practical application of the proposed methods to obtain data and/or generate the artifact.	<b>5</b> (2/4) <b>Final Class</b>	<b>Doing It!</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Class Presentations – Summary of Proposals</li> <li>❖ Next Steps (next 5 weeks)</li> <li>❖ Conduct Your Primary Research</li> </ul>

## Readings and Assignments

Project Phase		Readings Due	Assignments Due (Label all Assignments by their Number)
Initiation	Week 1		<b>Purchase Book, Review D2L course site, Review Course Materials, Work ahead of Schedule.</b>
Definition	Week 2	Robson Chap. 1 Preliminaries Robson Chap. 3 Developing Your Idea  <b>CP Student Guide</b>  <b>CP Proposal &amp; Contract Form</b>	<p><b>Assignment 1. (<i>Topic Rationale</i>)</b> Review your Research Methods Proposal. As applicable, build on that work.</p> <p>Look at the list of the issues developed during session 1 associated with your CP idea, make a selection of what is most important to focus on, and conduct a preliminary research investigation of your chosen topic focus using all useful outlets for information. <b>Develop a ½ page summary of the rationale for choosing your research project topic and place it in the D2L Dropbox. Bring a hardcopy to class.</b> Bring a hardcopy to class.</p> <p><b>Assignment 2. (<i>Citations I</i>)</b> Find, cite and briefly summarize (4) scholarly articles around your topic. Place this in the D2L Dropbox. Bring a hardcopy to class.</p> <p><b>Assignment 3. (<i>Proposal Draft</i>)</b> Complete a <i>Capstone Project</i> Proposal draft. Take it as far as you can. In particular work on the purpose of your study, why it should be under taken, and what the outcome(s) of the study might be. Employ the project management phases in the project design plan. Place this in the D2L Dropbox. Bring a hardcopy to class.</p>
Design	Week 3	Robson Chap. 2 Approaches to Research  Robson Chap. 4 Selecting the Method(s) of Collecting Data	<p><b>Assignment 4. (<i>Citations II</i>)</b> Find, cite and briefly summarize (4) additional scholarly articles around your topic. Place this in the D2L Dropbox</p> <p><b>Assignment 5. (<i>Methods Considerations</i>)</b> Review your research methods book/notes and the variety of approaches available to pursue your research. Write a ¾ page summary of 1) the theories involved in your study, 2) the question(s) involved in your study 3) the key variables involved in your study that you might to evaluate, 4) the populations, individuals and/or items you will need to investigate and 5) the materials required</p>

	<b>Week 4</b>	Robson Chap. 5 Practicalities of Data Collection	<b>Assignment 6. (Methods Approach)</b> Submit a 1-page description of your chosen Research Methods for your Artifact. This should include a rationale for the methodological approach as well as the basic data collection procedures <u>and as applicable</u> , the basic statistical procedures you will employ to enhance the robustness of your conclusions. Place this in the D2L Dropbox. Bring a hardcopy to class.
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>Week 5 Presentations and Next Steps</b>		<p><b>Assignment 7. (Presentation)</b> Prepare a 5-minute PowerPoint (or similar) presentation of your Capstone Project plan. Place a copy this in the D2L Dropbox.</p> <p><b>Assignment 7. (Project Proposal Draft)</b> Return to assignment 3 and revise it to take into account for the planning you undertook in weeks 3 &amp; 4. Place this in the D2L Dropbox.</p> <p><b>Assignment 9. (Next Steps Summary).</b> Place a ½ page summary of the progress you expect to make on the implementation of your Capstone Project in the next 5 weeks. Place this in the Dropbox.</p>