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COR 440 Liberal Arts Skills in Action Capstone Project

The final project is designed to synthesize the semester's readings and interpretations, using your own creativity, with your larger general studies and Elon experience. You will design and implement a project that demonstrates your understanding of key concepts of liberal education and their relationship to life. While self-designed, the project must be focused on a social problem or issue you'll face as a global citizen. The final "product" could be a traditional academic paper, a documentary or a video, an ad campaign, a thematic unit with lesson plans, a speech, a community workshop, etc.—it is up to you to design and execute the "product" that best implements the social problem and audience you want to address.

In addition to the final project you'll need to turn in a reflection describing the thought processes and ways in which you moved from question/idea, contextualized the issue, understood multiple perspectives on the topic, uncovered your own biases and assumptions, evaluated the ethics involved, found out what is currently being done and by whom, activated agency and found a way for you to personally get involved in ameliorating the issue, and finally how you took an informed, active stance on the issue.

Ultimately this project is a means for you to integrate and implement all the skills a liberal arts education cultivates and apply it to your role as citizen post-graduation. Like any large project, it needs to be broken down into manageable parts. Please check your syllabus and Moodle page for due dates: weekly progress report, project pitch/presentations, formal project proposal, etc.

Skills you are practicing as you do this project:

- locate, read, and process current research on the topic
- question self and readings (uncover biases and assumptions)
- make connections among texts/ideas/perspectives
- understand multiple angles/perspectives
- contextualize issue (why is it such a complicated problem that no one has solved it as of yet; what is currently being done to ameliorate the problem; what still needs to be done)
- hypothesize solutions and activating agency (what are 6-10 logical solutions founded on your research and contextualization you think could be done at the individual, community, and socio-cultural levels?)
- evaluate your own position on the issue and take an active, involved stance

Project Proposal

For what social issue are you trying to investigate, contextualize, analyze, synthesize, evaluate and hypothesize solutions?

What is your "big"/foundational question (and therefore your research question)?

What is the core issue? What are related ones?

What is the socio-cultural/historic context of the issue? Why is it a relevant and pressing issue to investigate and “solve”?

What are your “baseline” ideas on the topic as of right now?

What sources have you found so far that will ground your project? Where else might you need to look?

What theories or expert ideas are grounding, guiding or framing your own? How are you using or applying those ideas?

Who is your target audience?

What form is your “deliverable”/active citizenship piece going to take? (basically, what is your end product?)

Why do you think this is the most effective way to engage your audience?

If you were a person in your target audience, how would your project impact you?

How did you decide on which social issue to address?

What IS the issue (on a larger socio-historic context and for you personally)?

Why is this such a complicated issue it hasn't been “resolved” already?

Capstone project reflection

How did you decide on which social issue to address?

What IS the issue (on a larger socio-historic context and for you personally)?

Why is this such a complicated issue it hasn't been “resolved” already?

How did you “drill down” to figure out what the core problem actually is?

What research did you find and where did you find it?

How did the research shape, change, and/or solidify your understanding of differing positions on the topic?

What aspects did you struggle to make sense of and what aspects did you process easily?

What questions were answered for you in doing the project? What lingering questions do you still have?

What biases and assumptions did you uncover as you researched, analyzed, synthesized, and implemented the project?

What connections can you see between your project and the class (readings, discussions, assignments or activities, etc.) topic of the liberal arts?

How or in what concrete ways does the project implement or put into action your ideas?

Will you actually share your project with your intended audience? Why or why not?

How can you apply or transfer the skills learned in doing this project into other realms, such as post-collegiate life?