

**Proposal:** Change to Communication Studies Senior Capstone & Major Unit Count  
**Date:** January 25, 2022

*Proposed Changes*

- Reduce the COM 196 Senior Seminar from 4 units down to 2 units
- Remove COM 191 Senior Capstone Internship (4) from the curriculum
- Remove COM 197 Senior Capstone Research (4) from the curriculum
- Change the required units in the major from 48 units to 46-48 units (48 units only if a student chooses to complete a Major Honors Project (4 units) instead of the Senior Seminar (2 units))

*Rationale*

The department adopted a senior capstone experience requirement based on recommendations made in our last 6-year review. The required senior capstone experience has now been in place since 2020-2021. We have found that it complicates scheduling for students who want to graduate early and is unsustainable for our department for the following reasons:

- Students who desire to do an off-campus program the Spring of their senior year have to take their senior capstone in their junior year. The discussions brought up in the capstone are less pointed for students who still have a semester or year left of courses.
- Students who realize in the Spring of their junior year that they can graduate a semester early do not have a senior capstone option available in the Fall. To support students, a Senior Capstone Internship course has been offered in the summer, even though a faculty member had not planned or desired to do so originally.
- The Senior Capstone Internship also tended unhelpfully to discouraged sophomores and juniors from completing an internship.
- The Senior Capstone Research option requires a significant amount of faculty time. Due to the courses that we need to regularly offer, though, the department is not able to factor this time commitment into a faculty member's regular course load.

By reducing the units of COM 196 Senior Seminar, the department will be able to offer it in both the Fall and Spring semesters. Students will then be able to take it their final semester at Westmont, allowing the course to function more effectively as a "capstone" experience.