Introduction for Faculty Colleagues

The MA in Interactive Media is a unique 10-month graduate program in Elon’s School of Communications. Each year, a cohort of approximately 36 students participates in a skills-focused “boot camp” in July, takes five theoretical and skills-focused courses in the fall semester, participates in a January term work-abroad course, and completes additional coursework and a capstone project in the spring semester. COM530 is one of two (primarily) theoretical courses taken by all students in the Fall semester. The course is designed to provide a broad overview of theoretical concepts related to audiences and interactive media, while also allowing each student to develop expertise in a specific area of interest.

The primary project in this course is rigorous literature review on a student-selected topic. The project includes scaffolding across the development and writing process, and includes five major graded components: a topic proposal, an annotated bibliography, and three drafts of the literature review. The drafting process is broadly collaborative, and brainstorming and peer review activities are built into each stage of the process. A rubric for assessing drafts of the literature review is included at the end of the assignment.

The Assignment I Distribute to Students

COM 530 – Theory and Audience Analysis
Literature Review Assignment

You will produce a professional, scholarly document that demonstrates your mastery of a topic related to interactive media and audience. This document will form the foundation of your capstone project proposal.

Overall Goals
This program enables you to earn a Master’s degree in interactive media. The “mastery” that you will develop relates not only to practical skills like web development and video production, but also to a sophisticated understanding of important aspects of media psychology, sociology, and other sciences of human social processes. This project will allow you to engage critically, deeply, and
effectively with important thinkers and ideas in our field. This understanding of theory and interactive media will promote innovative practical work and more advanced critical engagement later in the program and in your career.

**Overview and Timeline**
As a graduate student, it is expected that you will develop a sophisticated understanding of theoretical concepts relevant to your area of interest in interactive media. Your major assignment in this course is to produce a high quality literature review that will inform the capstone project you produce in the spring.

There are five separate, graded components for this assignment: (1) you develop a formal proposal on a topic related to your professional interests, (2) complete an annotated bibliography of literature relevant to your topic, and (3, 4, 5) write the literature review.

1. **September 6: Research proposal (2 pages) (5%)**
2. **September 15: Annotated bibliography (~8-14 pages) (10%)**
3. **September 27: Literature review, first draft (~12-16 pages) (10%)**
4. **October 4: Literature review, second draft (10%)**
5. **October 11: Literature review, final draft (15%)**

At some point during the writing process, you are strongly encouraged to participate in a consultation with the Writing Center in Belk Library. This might be most useful before submitting the research proposal or first or second drafts of the literature review.

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**Part 1**

**Research Proposal Overview**

- Due September 6, 2013, 9:24am
- Includes title, rationale / motivations, discussion of engagement with social theory
  - What makes your topic a “theoretical problem?”

**Process**
The research proposal is the first formal state of the research process. It represents your best preliminary thinking about the topic you hope to devote a semester of research to. We will devote class time to topic development, but you are also
expected to begin preliminary research on your own. The proposal includes a title, a discussion of your rationale or motivations for pursuing the topic, and a discussion of why your topic presents an interesting and worthwhile theoretical problem. The title should reflect the research question precisely – go straight to the point and make it “sell” the idea you are exploring. In the research description, provide a rationale for your investigation and describe its value; outline any new insights you expect to develop or any current collection of knowledge you expect to study and describe in a new way – give reasons why the research will give life to new knowledge through at least one of the following:

1. taking a fresh approach in analyzing previous research in a new way

2. studying some aspect of interactivity and bringing new insights to methods, theories, etc.; or

3. inventing a new process or innovating something new in a way that is inspired after your research of past and current practice.

The proposal should be at least 500 words, and follow APA style conventions. APA style will be discussed in class, and an excellent reference is the Purdue OWL: APA Style: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/. Submit your research proposal online.

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### Part 2

**Annotated Bibliography Overview**

- Due September 13, 2013, 9:24am
- Identify and annotate best 25 sources, minimum 22 peer-reviewed
- Each annotation is 1-2 paragraphs outlining main arguments and findings, theoretical and methodological components, relationship to your research project
- The annotated bibliography will be peer-reviewed and assessed by the instructor

**Process**

A bibliography is a list of valuable resources (book chapters, journal articles, reports, etc.) one has used for researching a topic. An annotated bibliography includes a brief analysis of each resource called an annotation. In this annotation, summarize and assess the key components of the resource and relate the material to your research topic. You should use the summary to note the main arguments, the point of this resource and the topics it covers in relation to your research. The annotation must also include a brief, formal remark about how the source helps
shape your argument, theory or method. You can think of this bibliography as your carefully selected “recommended reading list” and summary of the key resources that can be used to educate others about this topic.

Take care to seek out the **primary sources** of data – primary sources are original research pieces directly based on interviews, surveys, fieldwork, experiments, focus groups, government or industry statistics and so forth. Secondary sources are those that describe or analyze one or more primary sources – these include books, reports and news articles that review or interpret primary data collected by someone else. If you find a secondary source with valuable information, see if you can track down the primary source to use and cite in your work. Sometimes secondary sources include valuable synthesis that is not found in the primary resources, so they can be of value at times.

You are to find and annotate at least **25** highly relevant information sources. Of these, **22 must be peer-reviewed** scholarship published in scholarly books, journals, or conference proceedings. We will discuss the concept of peer review in more detail in class. When possible, organize your annotations into themed groups with subheadings. Follow APA style for the annotated bibliography but DO NOT double-space the annotation – single-space it for our class.

A partial example of an annotated bibliography is posted to Moodle. Submit your annotated bibliography online.

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**Part 3**

**Literature Review, First Draft Overview**

- Due September 27, 2013, 9:24am
- The first draft is a complete, well-organized, well-edited manuscript
- 12-16 pages of text (plus title page, abstract, references)
- Format in APA Style
- This draft will be peer-reviewed and self-evaluated

**Process**

A literature review is a research project that critically evaluates the previous research on a given topic. Often, a literature review forms the first section of a research project, and shows how a researcher’s current project relates to previous work done on a topic. In your case, the literature review is the first step of your capstone project, as it allows you to develop a narrow but deep expertise in your area of interest. You will carry this expertise forward through your capstone project and into your interactive media career.
Moving from the annotated bibliography to the literature review will be challenging. The annotated bibliography project required you to consider scholarly sources as separate items, and begin to identify the larger themes that connected them. The literature review, in contrast, will require you to weave these sources together and use them to support your own argument about the topic. What is the “story” of this previous research? The literature review is not a simple summary of all this previous work, but a logical, critical narrative that demonstrates your understanding of the topic. Example literature reviews will be provided in class.

The first draft is not “rough” with regards to organization and editing. It represents your best attempt at producing an interesting, novel, and accurate argument about all the research you have read. Your audience for the literature are your peers in the class, as well as your future peers in the interactive media industry. This means your prose must be accessible and understandable by an audience containing HCI scholars, content strategists, graphic designers, account managers, web developers, video game designers, journalists, and others. This draft should follow APA manuscript style conventions (title page, abstract, headings, etc.).

Feedback and Assessment
Submit your first draft online, and bring four stapled hard copies to class. These will be distributed to your peer review group. You will review your peers’ manuscripts using the framework discussed in class and the provided rubric, and will have an opportunity to share and discuss the peer reviews in class. You will receive general feedback from me on this draft, and it will receive a formal grade.

Part 4
Literature Review, Second Draft Overview

- Due October 4, 2013, 9:24am
- The second draft is a completely reconsidered, reorganized, and revised manuscript
- 12-16 pages of text (plus title page, abstract, references)
- Format in APA Style
- This draft will be peer-reviewed, self-evaluated, and assessed by the instructor

Process
The second draft of the literature review is not a version of your first draft with fewer typos and better grammar. The second draft should represent a major rewrite of your manuscript, taking into account your increasing familiarity with your topic,
the direct feedback you have received so far, and your improving understanding of the literature review genre. At least half of the text in the first draft will likely be scrapped, and the text that remains will be completely reorganized and re-edited. The second draft has significantly improved organization, content, and flow.

Feedback and Assessment
Submit your second draft online, and bring four stapled hard copies to class. These will be distributed to your peer review group. You will review your peers’ manuscripts using the framework discussed in class and the provided rubric, and will have an opportunity to share and discuss the peer reviews in class. You will also receive detailed feedback from me on this draft, and it will receive a formal grade.

Part 5
Literature Review, Final Draft Overview

- Due October 11, 2013, 9:24am
- The final draft is a highly polished, sophisticated, and rigorous review
- 12-16 pages of text (plus title page, abstract, references)
- Format the final draft in ACM format
- This draft will be graded by the instructor

Process
The final draft of the literature review is the culmination of your scholarship in this course. It is an engaging, thorough, and polished manuscript that makes your mastery of the topic apparent. The final draft is a version of your work that is ready for inclusion in your professional portfolio as evidence of your expertise and high-level intellectual abilities.

The final draft should be formatting using the ACM SIG template (http://www.acm.org/sigs/pubs/proceed/pubform.doc). This two-column, single-spaced format is widely used in computing-related professional contexts, and results in a print-ready (and much shorter) manuscript. You do NOT need to convert your citations and references to ACM style, but should conform to ACM heading style.

Feedback and Assessment
Submit your final draft online. You will receive detailed feedback from me on this draft, and it will receive a formal grade.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
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<th>Score</th>
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<td>Structure</td>
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<td>Introduction</td>
<td>The introduction is inviting, clearly states a focused theoretical problem and previews the structure of the paper.</td>
<td>The problem is vaguely stated or unfocused, but the introduction is inviting and previews the structure of the paper.</td>
<td>The problem is vaguely stated or unfocused, and there is little indication about the structure of the paper.</td>
<td>There is no clear introduction of the problem or structure of the paper.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sequencing</td>
<td>Details are placed in logical order and the way they are presented effectively keeps the interest of the reader.</td>
<td>Details are placed in a logical order, but the way in which they are presented/introduced sometimes makes the writing less interesting.</td>
<td>Some details are not in a logical or expected order, and this distracts the reader.</td>
<td>Many details are not in a logical or expected order. There is little sense that the writing is organized.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>The conclusion is strong and leaves the reader with a feeling that they understand what the writer is “getting at”.</td>
<td>The conclusion is recognizable and ties up almost all the loose ends.</td>
<td>The conclusion is recognizable, but does not tie up several loose ends.</td>
<td>There is no clear conclusion, the paper just ends.</td>
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<td>Content</td>
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<td>Citations</td>
<td>All sources used for quotes and facts are credible, come from professional journals and are cited correctly.</td>
<td>All sources used for quotes and facts are credible, come largely from professional journals and most are cited correctly.</td>
<td>Most sources used for quotes and facts are not from professional journals, but are cited correctly.</td>
<td>Some sources used for quotes and facts are less than credible (suspect) and/or are not cited correctly.</td>
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<td>Focus on</td>
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<td>Main idea is clear, but the</td>
<td>Main idea is somewhat</td>
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<td>Problem</td>
<td>well-focused topic. Main idea stands out and is supported by detailed information.</td>
<td>supporting information is general.</td>
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<td>Arguments</td>
<td>Relevant, telling, quality evidence give the reader important information that goes beyond the obvious or predictable.</td>
<td>Supporting evidence is relevant, but only marginal evidence of critical thinking.</td>
<td>Supporting evidence relevant, but several key issues or portions of the storyline are unsupported.</td>
<td>Supporting evidence is typically unclear or not related to the topic.</td>
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<td>Synthesis of Previous Research</td>
<td>Key points from multiple sources are used as evidence for claims. The methodological and theoretical context of individual sources is taken into account.</td>
<td>Evidence from sources is used to support arguments, but the theoretical relationships among the sources are not always apparent.</td>
<td>Evidence from multiple sources is used to support arguments, but the manuscript contains lengthy summaries.</td>
<td>Sources are generally summarized sequentially.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>The explanation / interpretation is well connected to the research questions. The take-home message is clearly summarized. Gaps in the literature are discussed as appropriate, and future research is suggested.</td>
<td>Gaps in the literature are discussed as appropriate, and future research is suggested.</td>
<td>The author may inappropriately generalize beyond the evidence. Gaps in the literature are listed but not clearly discussed, and future research is not suggested.</td>
<td>Discussion incorrectly interprets evidence. The take-home message is not clear. Gaps in the literature may be listed but may be incomplete or unclear.</td>
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<td>Grammar &amp; Spelling</td>
<td>Writer makes NO errors in grammar or spelling.</td>
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<td>APA Formatting</td>
<td>Title page, abstract, headers, margins are all correct.</td>
<td>Some use of APA formatting.</td>
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<td>Reference List</td>
<td>All references are all formatted correctly, including all available DOIs</td>
<td>Most references are formatted correctly, with only a few minor errors.</td>
<td>Consistent errors in formatting.</td>
<td>Major problems or no use of APA formatting.</td>
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**TOTAL SCORE (out of 44)**