THE SENIOR PROJECT

The senior project should be seen as an identifiable extension of the concentration's rationale and course work, and should serve as a kind of capstone to your studies. There are no minimum credit requirements for the Senior Project, and as with other parts of the Concentration, the selection and carrying out of the Senior Project must be done in consultation with your Concentration committee.

The Senior Project is registered as Fair 401a through Fairhaven's on-line Independent Study process. The title of the ISP for Fair 401a must begin with "Senior Project;" you can add any other descriptor after this designation up to the allowed number of characters. The Senior Project is most often sponsored by your Concentration chair, but can be sponsored by another faculty member or member of your committee if approved by all members of your Concentration Committee.

There are a number of possible forms a Senior Project may take. A few of these are discussed below by way of guidance; however, you are free to devise some other form by which to fulfill this requirement so long as your committee agrees with that selection, but any Senior Project proposal should grow out of the themes and issues studied in your Concentration.

(1) A paper elaborating the ideas set out in the Concentration rationale: This paper might demonstrate how the methods and concerns of one discipline have been used to explore subjects of inquiry in another. For example, one student combined economics with environmental sciences. She developed a firm grasp of how our economic system affects the environment and how environmental legislation is often at odds with economic planning. In her senior project she sought to provide examples of the inter-relationship between economic and environmental planning, to explore contemporary thinking about economic and environmental priorities, and to compare economic strategies with the issues of environmental quality. These topics were introduced in her proposal; the senior project was her chance to deal with them in detail.

(2) A thesis dealing with one issue of central importance to the Concentration: This form allows the student to bring the knowledge gained in a variety of studies to bear on a single topic of interest. Examples here include "Nationalism and Racism in the South Since 'Brown vs. the Board of Education"--an extensive paper that narrows a Concentration in comparative cultures to an area of special and personal concern. In a senior thesis of this type all the issues mentioned in the Concentration proposal may not be explored, but it may test your ability to define the most important of them.

3) A research project: Such a project uses skills and methods gained in the Concentration. One student studied the shoreline of the south end of Lake Whatcom for his Concentration on water resources. His study used methods from chemistry, biology, geography, history and resource management--knowledge he had gained in the coursework of this concentration. His thesis did not focus on central theoretical issues as in (2), but rather on research he conducted in the field.

(4) Portfolio of your work. A portfolio should demonstrate what you learned and
serve as a cohesive statement of your intellectual and creative development. This is often the most valuable type of senior project for students in the creative arts. The portfolio may be a collection of short stories, an assembly of photographs, some representation of sculptures or paintings, or a series of scholarly papers. Some of the portfolio might be done solely for the senior project, and you should include examples of the most advanced quality of your work. The portfolio should be accompanied with a critical discussion of the work itself, an articulation of your efforts in light of the historical developments of the field, or perhaps a paper exploring the history of a particular style of conception. One student presented a portfolio of his paintings, together with an essay in which he detailed the relationship of his own work to the artistic issues that were crucial to Paul Klee. Another student included both a number of short stories and a paper on the subject that provided their frame of reference: the social responsibility of the writer as demonstrated in the 19th and 20th centuries. The purpose of the critical discussion is to describe how your creative endeavor is informed by your understanding of the culture that surrounds it.

(5) Series of demonstrations or lectures. Many students in the performing arts do a series of demonstrations in lieu of a portfolio. Again this should be accompanied with a critical discussion of the work in some larger social or intellectual context. One student of media and contemporary art produced a set of CDs and staged musical performances to fulfill part of his senior project. He accompanied this work with a paper discussing the role of electronic media in contemporary art forms. One student in history/literature gave a series of "public" lectures.

(6) Teaching a seminar: While it is possible to offer a student-led seminar unrelated to the senior project, this approach is especially valuable if teaching of some sort is an eventual goal of the Concentration. It not only offers a chance to test the strength and clarity of your ideas, but is necessarily concerned with the practical problem of helping others learn what these ideas are. Whether you provide the primary instruction or co-teach with others, this option requires the selection of subject matter, the design of a reading list, a description of content and approach, and a method of evaluation for the participants. Any student-led seminar must be approved by both your Concentration Committee and the Curriculum Committee at least two quarters in advance. Examples of student-led seminars include: "Child Sexual Abuse: The Community's Response," "Ethnic Literature," "Celtic Mythology," "Orchard Management," "Stress, Play and Health" (a collaboration of students and a faculty member), "Red Man's Land, White Man's Law" (with several faculty).

(7) Practicum or community service: Students in political theory, counseling, education, or social service often choose this as a way to gain field experience and to test their ideas in practical and concrete ways. One student has worked extensively with community agencies designing educational programs in sex education for the mentally handicapped. Another used her experience with community agencies dealing with child abuse to provide the core of her senior project. Others have worked with such organizations as Legal Aid, Womencare Shelter, the Farm Workers' Migrant Ministry, Planned Parenthood, and The Whatcom Land Trust. As with all other options, a practicum must be accompanied with a paper analyzing the social and intellectual issues involved.