

NUTR 223
Seminar in Humanitarian Issues
(The “MAHA Seminar”)
Fall Semester, 2015

Draft Document: Some sessions will be updated by email throughout the semester

Course Location: Feinstein International Center, 114 Curtis Street, Somerville

Course Times: To be determined after other courses for MAHA students are scheduled

Course Instructor: Dan Maxwell

Coordinator/TA: Phoebe Donnelly

Office Hours and Contacts:	Dan: Phone: E-mail:	Feinstein Center Feinstein Center daniel.maxwell@tufts.edu	Mondays or Wednesdays (by appointment) (617) 627-3410 (Feinstein Int'l. Center)
	Phoebe: Phone:	Email: Available by appointment Phoebe.Donnelly@tufts.edu (203) 984-5298	

Graduate Credits: One credit. Students register for credit in the fall semester.

Note: some sessions continue into the spring

Prerequisite: MAHA students only; no course prerequisites

Brief Course Introduction

This course is open for credit only to Master of Arts in Humanitarian Assistance (MAHA) students for whom it is a required course. The seminar emphasizes academic and research skills that are important for a professional in the humanitarian field. It also offers MAHA students the chance to explore in greater depth, key issues in humanitarian assistance. The seminar is also an opportunity to discuss in depth much of the theory and academic literature of other prerequisite courses. The MAHA capstone project, which is a requirement for graduation, is a separate output and students register for that in the spring. But preparations for the capstone are an important part of the seminar. The class is for one credit. Activities are concentrated in the fall semester, but the seminar also meets occasionally in the spring. Capstone projects are due in the spring semester

Course Objectives

This course has several objectives—some related to skills, some related to content. The skills objectives include:

- Reading and study skills
- Writing and written presentation skills
- Oral public presentation skills
- Research skills, including library use, research interpretation, and application skills

The content objectives include:

- More in-depth exploration of humanitarian topics—including those from other MAHA classes
- Development of a thesis or capstone project ideas and preparations to write the capstone in the spring
- Opportunities to hear from researchers from the Feinstein Center, other experts from Boston or visitors

Assignments:

- A brief paper reacting to each outside speaker or workshop. The paper can be 1-2 pages and should cover the key points the students would like to remember from the event and how they will use the ideas or skills discussed in the event as they continue in the program. These will be graded on a pass/fail basis.
- Each MAHA student will lead the discussion for half an hour based on their potential capstone topic. They will assign the reading, prepare discussion questions, and lead the discussion.
- Outline and work plan to complete the capstone.

Textbooks and Required Reading

There are no required books for the course. Some reading may be suggested or required on an as-needed basis during the semester.

The course is intended in part as a venue for further, in-depth discussion of topics arising for some or all of the class in other courses. Students are encouraged to bring up for discussion topics that they'd like to raise—based either on other courses or on personal professional experience. Students are also encouraged to request other specific skills training (examples in the past include how to use End Note; how to conduct literature reviews; etc.). There will be a library orientation for MAHA students outside of the seminar.

Specific readings will be suggested depending on what topics arise for in-depth discussion.

Students are referred to other information sources (see, for example, the syllabus for NUTR 229/ DHP D230) and are encouraged to explore websites mentioned there for information throughout the course.

There will be one two-hour session every week in the fall, organized by Phoebe Donnelly and led by Dan Maxwell and a number of others from the Feinstein Center, the Friedman School and the Fletcher Schools. Since this is a small class, all course announcements, presentation notes, assigned readings, team assignments, case study assignments and exams will be provided by e-mail from either Dan or Phoebe.

Student responsibilities

Each student will be responsible for:

- **Attendance/participation.** Participation accounts for 20% of the grade. This includes both attendance at the MAHA only seminar sessions as well as attendance at outside speaker events scheduled as part of the MAHA seminar, but open to the public. (Note: attendance at the MAHA seminar fulfills the requirement for FSNSP students to attend a seminar series).
- **Reading.** Readings will be assigned for some individual sessions as required. An important objective of the class is to practice reading research quickly, effectively, and with maximum comprehension. These exercises will be at the beginning of the semester
- **Presentations.** All students will be asked to make at least one oral presentation during the fall semester. All students will also present their capstone projects at the end of spring semester, and each is given an opportunity to practice the presentation before the public presentation

- **Capstone projects.** The capstone project is a major requirement of the MAHA program, and students should begin thinking about it as soon as they arrive in the fall. Throughout fall semester, students will work with their advisors to develop their project idea, to conduct a thorough review of existing evidence on their topic, and to develop the outline of the actual write up. This can be a research thesis if the student chooses. Or it can be a policy paper, an operational plan, or other project. Each student must obtain the approval of both his/her advisor and the MAHA Director before settling on a capstone project. This class will help all students keep on track during the fall semester. For this seminar, each student must complete:
 - The outline of the capstone project
 - A plan of work to complete the capstone.
- **Group discussions.** Part of the rationale for this class is to have a venue for MAHA students to delve more deeply into discussions about issues related to humanitarian work, humanitarian research or humanitarian issues more broadly. This is partly demand driven, so students are expected to suggest topics they would like to explore in greater depth. This can be done through inviting particular faculty to speak to the seminar; it can be done through facilitated discussion; or it can be student-led. Time can be made available each week for this kind of in-depth discussion, depending on student demand.
- **Grades.** Grading will be based on class participation (including leading a part of one of our sessions), completion of reaction papers, and a capstone outline and work plan to be submitted as the final assignment.
 - Attendance and participation account for 20% of the final grade
 - Written assignments account for 20% of the grade;
 - The practice presentation accounts for 20 %
 - The capstone outline and work plan account for 40%

A word about academic integrity

Each student is responsible for upholding the highest standards of academic integrity, as specified in the Friedman School's Policies and Procedures manual (<http://nutrition.tufts.edu/student/documents>) and Tufts University policies ([http://uss.tufts.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/Academic Integrity.pdf](http://uss.tufts.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/Academic%20Integrity.pdf)). It is the responsibility of each student to understand and comply with these standards, as violations will be sanctioned by penalties ranging from failure on an assignment and the course to dismissal from the school.

Academic integrity and avoiding plagiarism are very important topics. If students are not familiar with the standards for citation of other people's work, or other standards of academic integrity, there are workshops on these topics, and *it is the responsibility of the student to attend one. We will go over this in orientation and the first session. If there are questions on this, please ask Dan or Phoebe*

Accommodation of Disabilities

Students with documented disabilities are entitled to academic accommodation appropriate to their needs. If you require accommodations for this course, please contact the instructor confidentially prior to the end of the second week of classes.

The Capstone Project

All MAHA students must complete a capstone project as part of their degree requirements. The capstone will be introduced in the MAHA seminar, but as from 2015, it will be handled as a directed study during the second semester. The capstone project must evidence scholarly and/or professional analysis informed by the sustained and appropriate application of analytical methodologies. The capstone project is a significant analytical piece of work: it is a two-credit directed study with your advisor, and is expected to represent

roughly 250 hours of your effort by the time it is completed. It provides an opportunity for students to draw on their methodological, analytical, and substantive learning in a comprehensive written study.

One of the purposes of the MAHA Seminar is to prepare students to carry out the capstone project. As noted above, the capstone project is now graded separately from the MAHA seminar. By the end of the fall semester, you will be expected to have completed an outline and a work plan for completing the capstone. The work plan should include a schedule for a literature review, time for researching your basic question, time for write up, the due-date for a first draft, time for revisions and finalizing, and time for preparing for and actually doing an oral presentation. The work plan should be agreed upon with your capstone faculty advisor.

The detailed requirements for any capstone project are determined by the supervising faculty member and can take a wide range of forms, including but not limited to a traditional academic research thesis, a policy paper (whether for a government, an NGO or an international organization, whether for a real client or not), an operational plan (in development, in business, in public diplomacy, etc.), a business plan, or even a “how to” manual, as long as it fulfills the other requirements.

A more detailed explanation of capstone requirements is provided in a companion document titled, “Capstone Project Description MAHA 2015.”

Suggested Schedule. The capstone project requires planning from the beginning of the MAHA degree year of study. Although there is some flexibility and students are responsible to their academic advisor for progress, to help keep everyone on track, the following schedule of is a general guide:

Output	Date
Selection of a topic	Mid September
Formulation of question or objectives	Late September
Development of a one-page description	Early October
Draft Outline approach/ methods for capstone	Early November
Final Outline for capstone	End of Fall Semester
Work plan for completion	End of Fall Semester

(Other outputs for the capstone itself are part of the Directed Study)

Individual Session Objectives

These are planned sessions for fall semester, 2015. They will not necessarily appear in this order. The ordering of these sessions will be sorted out during September, and as we get word of visiting faculty, and once MAHA student schedules are set

Session	Date	Who	Objectives
Fall Semester			
Introduction and overview of seminar	Week 1	Dan/Phoebe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will have a good sense of the degree, requirements, and the seminar
Overview of Capstone	Week 2	Dan/Phoebe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will begin to think about capstone topics
Study Skills: Reading I			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will refresh reading and comprehension skills
Citation skills	Week 3	Rhys Sevier/Ginn Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will have a thorough understanding of academic citation
Academic Integrity		Phoebe/Dan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will have a thorough understanding of academic integrity
Study Skills: Reading II	Week 4	Dan/Phoebe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will have improved reading/comprehension skills
Capstone Progress – Formulating your Question			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will begin to formulate a capstone project question or objective
Study skills: Writing	Week 5	Sarah Detzner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will review and improve academic writing skills
Conducting Literature Reviews	Week 6	Roxanne Krystalli	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TBA (depending on speaker)• Students will have opportunity to discuss issues arising in other classes
Professional Skills: How research & practice intersect	Week 7	Karen Jacobsen	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will have a better understanding of the link between humanitarian practice and research
Professional Skills: Oral Presentation	Week 8	Mary Dulatre	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will practice and improve oral presentation skills using evidence and logical argument
TBA: External speaker	Week 9	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TBA (depending on speaker)• Students will have opportunity to discuss issues arising in other classes
Professional Skills: Oral Presentations	Week 10	Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each student will make an oral presentation on a topic of his/her choice
Capstone Progress – Formulating your Approach			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will have written out approach to the capstone project
Professional Skills: Oral Presentations	Week 11	Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each student will make an oral presentation with power point or other methods on a topic of his/her choice
Capstone Projects Update	Week 12	Phoebe/Dan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will have capstone project outlined and have work plan for completion of project (so as to be able to use Christmas vacation to work on it!)

Second Semester (not formally part of the seminar, but attendance is required to exempt MAHA students from requirement to attend FSNSP seminar series).			
Session	Date	Who	Objectives
Capstone Projects Update	Week 2, spring semester	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will demonstrate progress on capstone project over vacation (“progress” as defined by academic advisor)
Capstone rough draft due and progress reports from all	February 15	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will have a rough draft of the capstone project
External speaker/discussion	TBD	Dan/Phoebe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
External speaker/discussion	TBD	Dan/Phoebe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
External speaker/discussion	TBS	Dan/Phoebe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Capstone practice presentation	3 rd Week of April	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Students will practice the oral presentation of his/her capstone project
Capstone practice presentation	4 th Week of April	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Students will practice the oral presentation of his/her capstone project
Capstone public presentation	1 st Week of May	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Students will make a public presentation of his/her capstone project