Option 1: Thesis in Major Department.

Students may choose to fulfill the capstone requirement by conducting an honors or senior thesis (where at least three credits are granted) in their major department that incorporates the study of an educational issue into the research question. Through this option, students have the opportunity to spend considerable time studying a topic that intrigues them under the guidance and encouragement of a faculty member who has relevant expertise within their major department. This option provides an intense academic experience and seeks to integrate students’ work in their major department and their ESS background. Students will formulate a research question/theoretical inquiry they are interested in answering and assemble the tools and information to help answer their query. Students must plan ahead for this option. They must choose a topic, select an advisor, and have their thesis topic approved by ESS no later than April 15 of their junior year. Although the specific requirements for the thesis will vary depending on the major department, the thesis will not be approved by ESS as a means of fulfilling the capstone experience unless it incorporates the study of an educational issue into the research question. If the primary thesis advisor is not an IEI Fellow, then students should ask one of the “core” ESS faculty members to serve as a second reader/advisor. Please see the supplemental handout on choosing a faculty advisor. Students will be expected to present their findings at the ESS research roundtable in the spring of their senior year. Please note, since no official ESS credit is granted for this option, students who choose to fulfill their capstone experience by writing a thesis in their major department are required to take an additional three-credit course in ESS or three credits of ESS 47602 Research Lab to round out their ESS experience and satisfy the 15-credit requirement of the minor. This is an ideal option for students committed to pursuing a thesis in their major department. It is also ideal for students spending one year abroad during their junior year and can be integrated with their study abroad experience.

Option 2: Thesis in ESS.

Students who have completed at least two credits of ESS 47602 Research Lab through a research apprenticeship may choose to fulfill the capstone requirement by conducting a thesis in ESS. Through this option, students have the opportunity to gain additional expertise in the area of research they have been conducting with their supervising IEI faculty member. The ESS thesis may be an extension of previously conducted research or a new, independent project building on the research techniques and/ or content of their work in the apprenticeship. Students may need to apply for IRB approval in certain circumstances. Students must choose their thesis topic in consultation with the supervising faculty member and have it approved by ESS no later than April 15 of their junior year. Students must register for ESS 48600 Senior Thesis (3 credits) in the semester they plan to complete the thesis. Regardless of
whether the thesis is completed in the fall or spring, students will be expected to present their findings at the ESS research roundtable in the spring of their senior year. Students who choose this option may count up to three credits of ESS 47602 Research Lab and three credits of Senior Thesis toward the 15-credit ESS minor.

Option 3: Research Capstone Seminar.

Students who would like to gain research experience within the context of a formal course may opt to participate in a senior research seminar. This course will meet regularly to discuss a set of common readings on topics such as participatory and community-based research models, research methods, and the social contexts of education. Although the specific topics and requirements may differ depending on the course instructor, all students will conduct an independent research project and write a final paper integrating the theory and evidence from course material with their research findings. Students must register for ESS 43640 Seminar in Educational Research (3 credits). This seminar is only offered in the fall; however, students may have the option of continuing their research project during the spring of their senior year through a specific section of ESS 47602 Research Lab for additional credit. Additionally, students will be expected to present their work at the ESS research roundtable in the spring of their senior year. *Please note: students who conduct their research at off-campus sites will be required to provide their own transportation to/from the site. Every effort will be made to arrange sites and/or carpools that are within walking distance of campus.

Students must tentatively “declare” which option they will participate in to fulfill the requirements of the Capstone course in February of their junior year. This is not a binding decision but allows ESS faculty adequate time to plan appropriate course offerings. This will be done via an email link sent by the Associate Director of ESS early in the Spring semester each year.

NEW ESS COURSE

ESS 47602 Research Lab.
(Instructor: Various IEI Faculty; Credits: Variable)

Students are encouraged to complete a research apprenticeship under the direction of an IEI faculty member. Through this course, students have the opportunity to establish a relationship with a faculty member and engage various aspects of cutting-edge faculty research. The content and methods of the research will vary, depending on the question(s) that the student and the faculty member choose to pursue; however, all research apprenticeships aim to provide substantial training in and exposure to research. Students will meet regularly with the supervising faculty member, either one-on-one, or as part of a research group, to work on and/or discuss the research. Additionally, a final “product” (e.g., paper, poster, oral presentation) will typically be required in each semester of the research experience, as determined by the supervising faculty member. Although different faculty members will have different expectations regarding a student’s role in the research, all students should expect the research apprenticeship to entail approximately 3-4 hours of work per week for each credit taken (~10 hours per week for 3 credits). Students must register for the appropriate section of ESS 47602 Research Lab in each of the semesters they participate in the research apprenticeship after first seeking approval from the supervising researcher and contacting the Associate Director to register. Students may count up to three credits of Research Lab towards the 15-credit ESS minor. Please see the supplemental handout on choosing a faculty advisor.