Capstone Document Submission Expectations [assignment title]

J. Philip East [student name(s), all on one line, use first-to-last order rather than last, first]

Document Format and Content (heading)

If your assignment has multiple parts you would use a heading to identify each part. Numbering the headings is optional.

The document should have 1-inch margins all around. That is not the default style and this MS Word document was explicitly formatted to have 1-inch margins. If you create a new document, you will need to set the margins (and other formatting).

The font should be 12 point Times New Roman (or just Times). Lines should be single-spaced. Paragraphs and headings should have no automatic spacing before or after them but should be separated by a single blank line, except, that when you start an entirely new section/item with a new heading you should leave two blank lines before the new part (this does not apply to subheadings, use a single blank line there). To save on paper if/when I print the documents, do not move to a new page when starting new items. Since you are leaving blank lines between paragraphs, you need not indent the first line of the paragraph.

The assignment/exam/etc. title should be centered at the top of the first page. Then include a blank line followed by the name or names of the student(s) submitting the assignment. Next leave two blank lines and follow them with a heading for the first part of the paper/exam/journal/etc. You may number it if you wish but it is not required. Both the title and major headings should be bold-faced but do not change the font or font-size. Except for the document title, the document should be left aligned.

If you choose or need to cite references it is probably easiest to do so with footnotes or endnotes. (Be sure you do not use a “footer” which will include the note/citation on every page.) I am most familiar with APA citation style/format but you may use any style so long as you follow it consistently and it includes a mechanism for accessing the cited document—title, author, publication, and date. If you include a URL for the Web be sure the URL works as listed regardless of machine used, for example, sometimes a document retrieved via a Rod Library search has a URL that only works if you are using a campus computer (and perhaps going through the library). [To test this, copy and paste the URL into a browser that was not used when retrieving the document (or the same browser after deleting cookies).]

My preference for the type of document submitted is PDF. That incurs the least overhead for me when I download and read or print them. However, if you find it difficult to produce PDFs, I should be able to read most other kinds of documents (various versions of MS Word, WordPerfect, open document format, rich text format). The documents will generally be attached to e-mail messages.
Other formatting or layout settings are probably of little concern. Following these guidelines will allow for sufficient similarity of submissions to avoid inadvertent instructor bias. Note that this formatting allows approximately 500 words per page. It will save on paper when/if I print them out.

**Writing Suggestions**

You are strongly encouraged to plan your writing and then write. The alternative (some sort of stream-of-consciousness writing) is fine for some tasks but in our context you are trying to communicate specific knowledge and understanding. Having a plan helps you make sure you address the points you want to address and avoid getting caught up on some unimportant point or aside.

Perhaps the simplest way to plan is to produce an outline. The outline will indicate major ideas and supporting ideas. Your writing might describe some issue or set of arguments. In this case the outline would list the main ideas with the points or examples of each that make up your knowledge or understanding. Alternatively, you might be actually arguing a case (rather than listing and describing arguments) in which case you would want to provide a logical progression of ideas with explanations and examples and follow them up with your conclusion and the choices you made in reaching/choosing it. In both cases, it is important that you actually address ideas in an organized manner. If you do not, it is very likely that your response will be incomplete and incoherent (and found lacking when assessed).

As you write, keep in mind that each main heading in the outline will require a paragraph (or section/set of paragraphs if lots of explanation/examples will be provided). Each paragraph should be about one idea. Each sentence in the paragraph should help communicate (or help the reader understand) that idea. Read what you wrote. As much as possible, read as if you knew nothing about the topic. I will be grading what you wrote, not what you were thinking when you wrote it. There will be no reading between the lines (or at least you cannot expect particular kind of reading between the lines).

After a first or rough draft run spelling and grammar checks on your work. Writing elements identified by the grammar checks may not require changes but are often indicate places where you might write more clearly.

After a first proofing and spelling/grammar check, try to have someone else read what you wrote (and volunteer to do the same for them). Writing and exposing your writing to others is the only way to get better at writing. And, writing helps your thinking and understanding with respect to what you are writing about.

**Assessment**

Generally speaking, writing is about communicating ideas or understanding. Your primary goal in writing (in this class at least) is to write in a manner that will demonstrate what you know with
respect to the subject(s) being examined and the how that knowledge is being interpreted and
applied in the particular context of the question/item posed. Communicating knowledge or facts
could be done with an outline or lists. Communicating your interpretation of the importance,
use, application, etc. of knowledge requires using prose (not just listing or identifying facts).
Assessment/grading of written assignments will focus on how well you address the question/idea
posed.

I will be reading what you write and trying to note the main ideas and your understanding of
them. Hopefully:
• those ideas and understanding will be relatively easy to identify
• the collection of ideas is relatively complete (and/or consistent) for the question item
  posed
• the understanding will be accurate and free of misconceptions or errors
If so, then the work will be judged to be good or excellent. If the ideas and understanding are
hard to identify/follow or the collection of ideas is incomplete (or inconsistent) or there are
substantial misunderstandings/errors then the work will be less good and perhaps not okay.

My assessment of your submission will generally ask, “Did the submission:
• address the desired topic?
• do so appropriately and comprehensively?
• demonstrate a correct or appropriate understanding of the topic?
• clearly indicate opinions and conclusions and supply appropriate support or explanation?
• have no spelling, grammatical, or usage concerns or problems?
and “Was it well written?” i.e.,:
• it had no spelling, grammatical, or usage concerns or problems
• it did not assume the person reading your responses had knowledge of the topic
• the sentences were clear and flowed from one to the next
• the paragraphs addressed a single topic and flowed from one to the next
• its organization of ideas (paragraphs and sections) were obviously planned and formed a
  coherent communication of the topic being addressed
and finally, “Did the submission follow all formatting and submission directions?”