Dear 2018/2019 Capstone Research Students,

Welcome to Capstone Research, and thank you for choosing to conclude your high school English experience with us. The goal of the Capstone Research course is for you to explore an academic topic, problem, or issue that interests you and design, plan, and conduct a year-long research-based investigation to address it. In order to prepare you for this task, we feel it is essential that you spend some time exploring research methods and familiarize yourselves with options you may want to consider using throughout the year.

PART 1 - Read a book

We are asking you to complete some summer reading that will assist you in preparing for the tasks that lie ahead. We want to offer you a range of reading experiences in non-fiction—works you probably ought to read but may not have attempted to read with a research-minded focus. Please see the list of book options and the corresponding questions to consider while reading. You must be ready to discuss the answers to these questions upon your return to school at the end of summer.

PART 2 - Start preliminary research on a topic of interest

Almost EVERY AP Research students' advice to YOU was to come back to school with a solidified research topic. The sooner you are ready to begin, the better you can plan your time and your research approach. The second most popular piece of advice was to choose a topic that ACTUALLY interests you. Many of last year's students chose topics they wanted to explore in college and never lost interest in their work. We want you to get a head start on the process by doing the following:

1. **Read FIVE articles/papers on your topic.** Find a healthy balance between peer-reviewed research - use Google Scholar and/or EBSCOHOST [bit.ly/APCapstoneEBSCO] and news articles. Keep a log of what you read for reference.

2. **Complete a typed response to the following questions about your topic of interest.**
   a. **Write about the history of your topic...**
      i. How did your topic come into being?
      ii. What is its own internal history?
      iii. How and why has the topic changed through time?
   b. **Write about how your topic is structured and categorized...**
      i. How does your topic fit into the context of a larger structure or function as part of a system?
      ii. How can your topic be grouped into kinds?
      iii. How does your topic compare and contrast with others like it?
   c. **Write about What Ifs...**
      i. How would things be different if your topic never existed?
      ii. What would happen if your topic disappeared?
3. **Draft a preliminary research question** (this CAN and SHOULD change as you refine your focus throughout first semester). Your research question should address the GAP in the information available, or, in other words, what hasn't been answered about your topic, yet. The point of AP Research is to conduct NEW research and provide answers to your research question that haven't been provided before. Here are some research questions from last year’s students (but please keep in mind, these questions went through a lengthy revision process before they have gotten to you):

   a. Is there a relationship between the number of women working in key positions of television production and the representation of women on screen?
   b. What factors have led audio-based podcasts towards growth in popularity?
   c. Is ambient music or personally-selected music more effective in reducing self-perceived academic stress for Advanced Placement students?
   d. How can industrial symbiosis be effectively implemented in schools in the United States to improve waste management programs?

In class, you will learn to research and write clearly and critically about your topic—but a year is a long time to devote to a single focus, so you must remember that there will be struggles and frustrations along the way. However, the struggles and frustrations will give way to true growth, learning, and appreciation for the research process, which will help us accomplish the goal of successful preparation for the Capstone Research Oral Defense Presentations in April of 2018.

Enjoy your summer, and happy reading. If you come across a different book that meets the criteria for summer reading, by all means, choose that book instead, **but please email me to check its validity**.

Sincerely,

Mr. James Hultgren