Instructor: Merle McGee  
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Day/Hour: Monday 6:45-8:25 p.m.  
Location: 194 Mercer Street, Room 305 (location will change in spring 2016)  

COURSE SUMMARY AND OBJECTIVES  

Capstone is learning in action. Part of Wagner’s core curriculum, it provides students with both a critical learning experience and an opportunity to perform a public service. Over the course of an academic year, students work in teams – either to address challenges, solve problems and identify opportunities for a client organization or to conduct research on a pressing social question. Students will design the approach, conduct the data collection and analysis, and present findings, both orally and in writing, to the client.  

In architecture, the capstone is the crowning piece of an arch, the center stone that holds the arch together, giving it shape and strength. Wagner’s Capstone program plays a similar role by building on students’ previous coursework and expertise, while also enhancing student learning on policy and management issues, key team process skills, and research skills. Capstone requires students to interweave their learning in all these areas, and to do so in real time, in an unpredictable, complex real world environment. Although each student will be assigned to a team, the class will work as a learning community dedicated to the success of all the projects.  

We have identified an array of potential projects. Students will be assigned to a project team based on a number of factors including student preference and expertise as well as team size and availability to work during the day with the client. Teams are usually comprised of 3-5 students who bring a mix of skills and experience and have expressed an interest in the project. To the degree possible, students will get their first or second choice of project.  

LEARNING OBJECTIVES  

Capstone integrates and enhances learning in several areas: a content or issue area, process skills including project, client and team management, and research methods for gathering, analyzing and reporting data. Learning objectives are:  

A. CONTENT  
Students should:  
- understand the policy context for their project;  
- be familiar with specialized vocabularies required to perform the project successfully;  
- be aware of critical research related to their content area;  
- be capable of positioning and evaluating their project within its broader policy context.
B. **PROCESS**

Overall, students should demonstrate a capacity for flexibility and resilience, as shown by adapting to changing and complex circumstances, balancing competing demands and accepting uncertainty and lack of clarity when necessary.

1. **Project Management**
   Students should demonstrate the ability to:
   - assess the client organization and its environment;
   - frame and refine the problem presented by the client;
   - develop a work agreement with the client for the project;
   - develop a project work plan with timelines and deliverables;
   - monitor progress against the work agreement and workplan;
   - revise the workplan as necessary;
   - develop supported and realistic recommendations.

2. **Client Management**
   Students should demonstrate the ability to:
   - develop and sustain their relationship with the client;
   - negotiate a project work plan with timelines and deliverables;
   - maintain regular and productive contact with the client;
   - solicit and integrate feedback on progress against the contract and modify as necessary;
   - deliver final product to client’s satisfaction.

3. **Team Management**
   Students should demonstrate the ability to:
   - understand team formation and development;
   - understand the importance of interpersonal dynamics and team norms;
   - create and periodically review their team charter;
   - develop clear role descriptions for team members;
   - create a productive team culture;
   - manage team assignments and accountability;
   - advocate points of view and negotiate differences of opinion;
   - solicit and offer feedback;
   - appreciate and learn from cultural differences;
   - create a productive relationship with the instructor.

C. **RESEARCH**

Students should demonstrate the ability to:
- identify appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative data gathering and analysis methods for their particular project;
- follow established sampling procedures to create appropriate samples for their particular project;
- carry out data collection methods appropriate for their particular project, potentially including surveys and questionnaires, individual interviews, focus groups, and access to already existing datasets;
- situate their findings in the broader related literature;
- draw conclusions based on their findings;
- communicate their work effectively both orally and in writing.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The class will involve presentations from the instructors and guest speakers, class discussion and team meetings. Course requirements include:
- enrollment in both fall and spring semesters;
- attendance and participation in class activities and team meetings;
- completion of assignments on time;
- participation in field work;
- participation in meetings with clients;
- participation in preparation and presentation of findings;
- creating a productive and supportive team culture;
- meeting regularly with class instructor.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Final grades are assigned at the end of the second semester by the instructors. At the end of the first semester students will receive an Incomplete. Students are graded on the products they deliver to their clients, meeting deadlines, teamwork, ongoing communication with the instructor, class participation, and evidence of progressive learning compared to course objectives throughout the process. Student’s final grade is based on individual performance. It is not based on general team performance. The course has a series of milestones that will serve as interim work products.

COURSE MILESTONES

There are a consistent set of milestones (activities and products) that are required of students. Some suggested time frames for selected milestones are found in parenthesis, though actual timing during the course of the year may vary depending on the specific situation of each team and client.

These milestones include:
- development of team norms/team charter (October)
- “entry conference” with client and faculty to explain the process of the course, establish relationship, assess the client organization, and gain data to clarify the presenting problem or issue and client’s vision of a successful project (October);
- meeting with client to finalize work agreement and work plan (November);
- end of first semester self, team/peer, and course evaluations; discussion of team process and progress (December);
- progress report to client (January);
- draft of first sections of final report (February);
- draft final report (March);
- mock client presentation to class/faculty for feedback (April);
- final report to faculty and client and presentation to client (April/May);
- end-of-semester reflection positioning project in larger issue context (end April);
- end of course self, team/peer and course evaluations (end April);
- presentation for Wagner end-event (May).
GRADING

Students will earn two credits for the fall semester and two for the spring semester of Capstone. It is the custom in Capstone to report end of first semester grades as IP to reflect the “work in progress” nature of the year-long project.

Grading Criteria: Students will be graded on both the products they deliver to their clients and evidence of progressive learning throughout the course, based on the Learning Objectives. Fifty percent of grade is based on work products identified in the milestones as well as any interim deliverables to the client or assigned by the faculty member. Fifty percent is based on evidence of the individual student’s learning during the course through participation in the team’s work and class activities and his/her ability to act on peer and faculty feedback and build an effective team and relationship with the client and instructor. As noted above students are graded based on individual performance.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND DEADLINES

Each team has a $500 annual operating budget for their project expenses. In addition, we will offer supplemental travel funding for airfare/train travel for students who must travel outside of NYC for project research. Check your Student Capstone Guide for more details.

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<td>10/16</td>
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<td>Draft of full report</td>
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<td>Final report submitted</td>
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<td>5/10</td>
<td>Capstone end-event</td>
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TEXTBOOK AND OTHER READINGS

Suggested book for the class (optional)

Flawless Consulting: A Guide to Getting Your Expertise Used

By Peter Block

Cost: $40.00 approximately

Chapters: 1-6, 10-12, 14 and 15

All other readings will be provided on NYU Classes.

FALL CLASS SCHEDULE

The list of weeks and topics that follows is preliminary and subject to change as necessary. The intent is to use class time in a way that enables teams to produce the highest quality projects on a timely basis and achieve the learning objectives of the course. There will be more class-based presentations and discussions early on in the course as well as time for team meetings and consultation with other classmates and faculty during class time. The first part of the second semester will allow for greater time for team working sessions. Students should expect to meet weekly as a class or team unless otherwise indicated here or agreed in class.

9/14/15 - Introductions and Project Presentations

Review of syllabus and clarification of course organization and expectations. Project presentations by potential client organizations will begin.
9/21/15 - Project Presentations and Next steps
Project presentations by potential client organizations will continue. We will discuss next steps, including writing the team charter and preparation for first client meeting.

Due: Project preference forms and resumes emailed to faculty advisors by September 22.
Teams will be announced 9/26/15

9/28/15 - Work in Teams - No formal class meeting
Meet in teams to prepare your team charter and review client proposal and discuss clarifying questions.

Initial client meeting should be held between October 6-23.
Note: Our classroom is available for your use on Monday evenings during class hours.

10/5/15 - Preparing for Initial Client Meeting
Prep for initial client meeting. Review work agreements and project plans.

Note: No classes on October 12 and 13 - School closed.

10/19/14 – Work in Teams - No formal class meeting
Work in your teams to develop your draft of client work agreement, internal work plan and prepare for your second client meeting. Instructor available to meet with teams as needed.

Due: Team Charter is due on October 16 (email to faculty advisor)
Note: Second client meeting should be held by November 17.

10/26/15 – Wagner Capstone Teambuilding Session (in lieu of regular class)
Mandatory Teambuilding session at Kimmel location: TBA

11/2/15 - Working Styles - Guest lecturer
This session will be devoted to discussing social/working styles to help you work more effectively in your team and with your client and instructor.

11/9/15 - Consulting with Clients Work Agreements and Work Plans
Consultation with teams on agreement and work plans

11/16/14 - Qualitative Data - Survey, Interviews and Focus groups - Guest lecturer
Class will focus on best practices in selecting and implementing qualitative data tools
Due: Signed work agreements and work plans should be emailed by December 5

11/21/15 - Work in Teams - No formal class meeting
Meet in teams to work on project planning and preliminary research. Instructor available to meet with teams as needed.

Due: Self evaluations, peer evaluations and course evaluations TBD
(Email to Wagner)

11/30/15 - Work in Teams - No formal class meeting
Meet in teams to work on project planning and preliminary research.

12/7/15 - Team updates, Strategy and Solutions
Each team will give a state-of-the-project briefing. We will revisit team charters and discuss team dynamics. Teams will problem solve any challenges with client relations. Identify supports and resources required to complete the project. A formal, written team assessment and first peer evaluation will also be completed. We will review the Spring Schedule.

SPRING CLASS SCHEDULE

The second semester will be structured to allow for regular check-ins and consultation between teams and faculty on progress in meeting project tasks per the work plan. The main emphasis is to spend time on getting the project completed. For planning purposes, please use the following schedule. Each team via faculty liaison are required to provide instructor e-mail updates on team progress every other week beginning January 18, 2016

1/25/16 - Team consultation
In this first class meeting teams will reconnect with each other. We will have a discussion of potential needs for instructional sessions during the second semester. Capstone progress report for clients is due to instructors. We will also discuss giving feedback to the client.

2/1/16 & 2/8/16 -Work in Teams - No formal class meetings
Instructor available to meet with teams as needed.

2/15/16 school closed for President’s Day

2/29/16 - Presentations Skills Workshop (in lieu of regular class)
Mandatory Presentation Skills session at Kimmel location: TBA

3/7/16 – Providing Feedback to Clients and Team Consultation
Check in and review progress/challenges with your faculty advisor.
### 3/14-3/20 – SPRING BREAK

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| 3/21/16 | Submit draft of final paper (first four-sections) - No formal class meeting  
Draft of the first sections of final report (introduction, background, methodology, and literature review) are due by March 23 via Email |
| 3/28/16 | No formal class meeting |
| 4/4/16 | Dress rehearsal for final presentations |
| 4/11/16 | Final paper draft due - No formal meeting  
The complete draft of final paper is due. Once approved by faculty advisor report can be sent to client for review. Instructor available to meet with teams as needed. *(final presentations scheduled)* |
| **Final presentations scheduled between April 7-27**  
**Faculty advisor must be present!** |
| 4/18/16 & 4/25/16 | No formal class meeting  
Edit final report. Be sure to include client and faculty feedback. *(final presentations scheduled)* |
| 5/2/16 | Last Class – Final Report Due  
Report back on client response to final presentation. Review of class and lessons learned.  
**Evaluations will be sent from Wagner** |
| **May 10 - Capstone End Event**  
5 pm-6:30 pm Kimmel Center, 10th Floor  
Note: one team member should arrive at 4:30pm for set up |