NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE

Capstone: Advanced Projects in Management, Finance, and Policy I
CAPSTONE: GP 3401 Section 4

Fall 2015 & Spring 2016 Terms
Mondays 6:45pm-8:25 pm
Global Center for Academic & Spiritual Life Room 384

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Office Hours: By appointment

COURSE SUMMARY

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 to address challenges, solve problems and identify opportunities for a client organization. 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 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 divided into teams, the class will work as a learning community dedicated to the success of all the projects.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Capstone integrates and enhances learning in several arenas: a content or issue area, process skills including project, client and team management, and research methods for gathering, analyzing and reporting data. The specific 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 an internal project work plan with timelines and deliverables;
• monitor their progress against the work agreement and work plan;
• revise the work plan as necessary;
• develop well-supported and realistic recommendations.

2. Client Management
Students should demonstrate the ability to:
• develop and sustain their relationship with the client;
• negotiate a work agreement 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 group 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;
• manage team assignments and accountability;
• advocate points of view and negotiate differences of opinion;
• solicit and offer feedback;
• appreciate and learn from cultural differences.

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;
• effectively communicate their work both orally and in writing.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
I have identified an array of potential projects. Potential clients will present their projects to you on Monday, September 21st during our class session. I will ask you for your preferences, but – just to be very clear – I will create the teams based not only on your preferences, but on your previous coursework, work and life experience, other expertise, and team size. Teams are comprised of 3-5 students.

The class will involve presentations from the instructor, possible guest speakers, class discussion and team meetings. Course requirements include:
• enrollment in both 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.

Some client organizations may prefer virtual and live meetings. This may necessitate the use of skype /teleconferencing /televideo conferencing for client meetings, depending on the facilities available to the client.

**EVALUATION and GRADING**

Students will receive two credits for the fall semester and two for the spring semester. At the end of the first semester, students will receive a grade of “IP” (Incomplete Pass) to reflect the “work in progress” nature of the year long project. I will assign final grades at the end of the second semester.

Grades will be allotted to individuals, not to the team as a whole. That is, team members may receive different grades if I feel that is warranted. In circumstances where there is clear evidence of uneven contributions among team members, adjustments may be made to individual team member’s grades. I will make this judgment based both on my assessment of students’ contribution and learning; on the assessments you give each other as part of the evaluation process at the end of the first and second semesters and the assessment scores clients give to teams regarding the quality of the written product and the team’s overall work.

**Timeliness and meeting deadlines are also important aspects of professional behavior.** Accordingly, late projects will be penalized in terms of grading. Teams who do not submit a draft report by **April 1, 2016**, or do not have an approved final report by **May 9, 2016**, will have the grade based on the quality of their report lowered by one full letter grade (for example, from A- to B-) due to lateness.

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.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**


**COURSE MILESTONES**

The course has a series of milestones – both activities and products -- that will serve as interim work products. I’ve suggested time frames in parentheses, though actual timing during the course of the year may vary depending on the specific situation of each team and client. Specific milestones include:

- Preference/information forms (September)
- Client presentations (September)
- Team charter (September/October)
- “Entry conference” with client and faculty to explain the process of the course, establish relationship, assess the client organization, and gather data in order to clarify the presenting problem or issue and client’s initial vision of a successful project (October)
- Summary by team of first meeting with client and clear statement of the problem (October);
• Preliminary client-team contract or work agreement; presentation to class/faculty for feedback prior to client presentation (October/November);
• Negotiations with client to finalize contract (October/November);
• Final, signed client-team contract and detailed team work plan (October/November);
• End-of-first semester self, team/peer, and course evaluations; discussion of team process and progress (December);
• First draft of final project report to faculty (February);
• Second draft of final project report to faculty (March/April);
• Rehearsal of client presentation before class/faculty for feedback before presentation to client (March/April);
• Final report and presentation to client (April);
• End-of-second semester reflection, positioning project in larger issue context (May);
• End-of-course self, team/peer, client and course evaluations (end April/beginning of May);
• Presentation for Capstone Expo (May).

CLASS SCHEDULE: FIRST SEMESTER

University Academic Calendar 2015-2016: https://www.nyu.edu/registrar/calendars/university-academic-calendar.html#1158

IMPORTANT NOTE RE FALL SCHEDULE: Monday, October 12 is a holiday and no classes are held. However, the next day, Tuesday October 13, is following a Monday class schedule. That means students expect to go to their Monday classes on Tuesday. So if you are planning on holding class that week, it must be Tuesday the 13th, not Monday the 12th.

Twice during the year we require all students to attend a Capstone skills training instead of going to class. These dates are:

1) October 26, 2015: Capstone Advanced Team Session. This a team-building session in which students will work as teams. All students must be present.
2) February 29, 2016: Presentation Skills training. All students must be present.

Also, Capstone Expo will be on Tuesday, May 10, 2016.

The list of weeks and topics that follows is preliminary and subject to change. 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.

Session I: Introductions (9/14/15)
Quick introductions followed by a review of the syllabus and clarification of course syllabus and expectations. Discussion of Q&A preparation for potential client organizations.

Session II: Client Project Presentations  (9/21/15)
Project presentations will be made by potential client organizations followed by student Q&A.

- Bowery Residents' Committee
- Episcopal Charities of the Diocese of New York

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Due: Send in Student Information & Preference Form and attach your resume to edc204@nyu.edu by September 25. Teams will be posted on the NYU Class site by Monday, September 28th. Note: Teams will be created based not only on your preferences, but on your previous coursework, work and life experiences, other expertise and team size. Teams are typically comprised of 3-5 students.

Assignments for Session III:

- Read for class discussion: Flawless Consulting, chapters 1, 2 & 3.
- Be prepared to do the following:
  - Schedule a get-together that must happen before October 9th that is purely about getting to know each other.
  - Develop a plan to schedule and conduct an initial 60-minute client meeting during the period from September 29th through October 9th. I must be present at the meeting. My availability is: Friday, October 2nd between 930-1; Friday, October 9th 930-1.

Session III: Discussion of Team Charter and Next Steps (9/28/15)
We will discuss the reading, next steps, including writing the team charter, preparation for first client meeting, work agreements, and project plans. Teams will also have their first meeting to Prepare for initial client meeting, both as a class and in teams considering essential questions such as:
- What do you need to learn from this meeting?
- How can you help your client give you that information?

Assignments for Session IV: Read for class discussion: Flawless Consulting, chapters 3 & 4.

Assignments for Session V: Teams prepare a 2-page memo summarizing the team’s findings from their assessment meeting, including a clear statement of the problem. Be prepared to present to class.

Session IV: Initial Client Meeting (10/5/15)
Discuss initial client meeting. We will discuss common challenges in Capstone, common data collection methods, and the elements of a successful client-team work agreement and an (internal) work plan. Work in teams to prepare your team charter.

Assignments for Session V:

- Remember there is no class next Monday due to university holiday so we will be meeting on Tuesday, October 13th instead.
- Teams prepare a 2-page memo summarizing the team’s findings from their assessment meeting, including a clear statement of the problem. Be prepared to present to class.

Session V: Work in Teams (10/13/15)
Teams present overview of meeting and findings from their assessment to class. Work in your teams to develop your team charter and prepare for your second client meeting. Begin draft of client work plan.

Assignments for Session VI:
• As first step toward developing full work agreement, teams prepare draft work plan including: statement of the problem, objective of project, information needed, boundaries of the project, final product and interim deliverables. **This assignment must be submitted via NYU Classes by no later than 5PM, October 23rd.**

• Work on finalizing team charter to submit via NYU Classes by no later than 5 PM October 26th.

• Schedule a 60-minute, in-person meeting to review final work agreement with client to occur on November 9th. Teams should confirm client availability to meet at one of the three following times for the meeting: 930AM, 1130AM or 2PM.

**Session VI:**  (10/19/15)
Teams continue to work on team charter and work plan. Teams will spend time working together to prepare for your next client meeting.

**Assignments for Session VII:**

• Submit draft Work Plan by no later than 5PM, October 23rd

• Submit finalized Team Charter by no later than 5 PM October 26th

• Schedule a 60-minute, in-person meeting to review final work agreement with client to occur on November 9th. Teams should confirm client availability to meet at one of the three following times for the meeting: 930AM, 1130AM or 2PM. If your client cannot make these times please email me to discuss a new time.

**Session VII: Working Styles  (10/26/15)**
Instead of our regular class students will be expected to attend a Capstone Advanced Team Session. The session will happen 6:45-8:25 pm in the Kimmel Center for University Life, 60 Washington Square South, in the Rosenthal Pavilion-10th Floor. Attendance will be taken, and it is expected that all team members from all teams will be there.

**Assignment Reminder:**

• Read for class discussion: *Flawless Consulting, chapter 5 & 6 for Session VIII*. Submit writing assignment by 5PM 11/2 and bring a copy to class to use for discussion.

• Begin negotiating the draft work agreement, incorporating my comments, with your client. This could involve in-person meetings or could be done by email and phone. I do not need to attend this meeting.

**Session VIII: Work in Teams  (11/2/15)**
This session will be devoted to reviewing how best to approach contracting meetings and the challenge of contracting. Each team will also review their final work plan with their instructor and discuss next steps.

**Assignment Reminder:**

• Consider updates you want to make to team charters and bring list of ideas to Session IX.

• Read for class discussion: *Flawless Consulting, chapter 8 & 9 for Session IX*. Submit writing assignment by 5PM 11/13.

**Session IX: Work Agreements and Work Plans  (11/9/15)**
This session will be devoted to assessing and addressing resistance to help you navigate challenges you may face in this area.

Begin work on updating team charters: this will involve reviewing how the team has worked together so far, deciding what elements you wish to retain and then re-designing the elements you want to change.

**Assignment for Session XI:**
- Finalize written work plan agreed to with client. This should be signed by the client and team. **Finalized and signed work plans should be submitted to NYU Classes by no later than 5PM November 16.**
- Read for class discussion: *Flawless Consulting, chapter 10, 11 & 12 for Session XI.* Submit writing assignment by 5PM 11/ and bring a copy to class to use for discussion.

**Session X: Work in Teams  (11/16/15)**

*No formal class meeting, but teams should arrange to meet during class time.* Schedule a meeting with your team to make progress or project as needed. Review of work and relationship with client thus far.

**Assignment for Session XI:**
- Read for class discussion: *Flawless Consulting, chapter 10, 11 & 12 for Session XI.*
- By 5PM November 23rd, each team should submit a 2 page memo summarizing:
  - particular issues they are facing in moving their work forward and their plans to develop an effective solution
  - information about data gathering methods—focusing on the tools you intend to use, and can also include: interviewing, surveys, observation, literature review, and focus groups.
  - The memo can be single or 1.5 spaced and have a font size no larger than 11

**Session XI: Work in Teams  (11/23/15)**

This session will be devoted to reviewing information on working styles to help you work more effectively in your team and with your client and instructor. In addition, time permitting teams will share an update on the challenges and success they are facing in their projects.

**Session XII: Team Building  (11/30/15)**

We will revisit team charters and discuss how well they have served each team. Revisions will be made if necessary. We will talk about strategies to manage any problems that you are having at this point and identify any special needs that you may have. We will also revisit team roles. A formal, written team assessment and first peer evaluation will also be completed.

**Due: Self evaluations, peer evaluations and course evaluations by December 8**

**Session XIII: Team Building  (12/7/15)**

We will revisit team charters and discuss how well they have served each team. Revisions will be made and I will be available as needed. Teams will have time to meet at the end of class, time permitting.

**Session XIV: Team Building  (12/14/15)**

We will review the Spring Schedule. Team meetings. I will be available as needed. Teams will have time to meet at the end of class, time permitting.
CLASS SCHEDULE: SECOND SEMESTER
During this semester, much of the time will be set aside for teams to meet on their own or with me. We can be flexible about the need for formal class meeting times as the semester progresses. However, as needed, we will schedule problem-solving or skill-building sessions, so you must be available every Monday night during class time.