NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE
Capstone: Advanced Projects in Management, Finance, and Policy
Course Number: CAP-GP 3401/3402 Section 002
Fall 2016 - Spring 2017
Monday 6:45-8:25pm, 25 W. 4th Street, Room C-8

Ivy Pool, Adjunct Associate Professor of Management
ivy.pool@nyu.edu, 917-698-4373
Office Hours: Wed 12-1p, and as needed

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 workplan;
• revise the workplan 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 in the first couple of weeks in class. 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 not be NYC-based. This will necessitate use of videoconferencing for client meetings, depending on the facilities available to the client. The school will offer financial support for some costs of travel, if deemed necessary.

EVALUATION and GRADING

Students will receive 1.5 credits for the fall semester and 1.5 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. I will make this judgment based both on my assessment of students’ contribution and learning and on the assessments you give each other as part of the evaluation process at the end of the first and second semesters.

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. 70% of the final 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. 30% is based on evidence of the individual student’s learning during the course through participation in the team’s work and class activities, his/her ability to act on peer and faculty feedback; individual and team preparation for and performance at client meetings; and end-of-semester faculty, peer and self evaluations.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Additional readings will be suggested to team when projects are selected.

CLASS SCHEDULE: FIRST SEMESTER

The list of weeks and topics that follows is preliminary and subject to change. Students should expect to meet weekly as a class or team unless noted below.
Week 1 – September 12th: Overview and Introductions
Review the syllabus and clarify course structure and expectations. Begin presentations from potential clients about their projects.

➢ Assignments for Week 2
  o Create or update your linkedin profile and send me an invitation to connect.
  o Read all client proposals and prepare questions for potential clients.

Week 2 – September 19th: Client Presentations
Continue presentations from potential clients. Clients will respond to student questions about their proposals.

➢ Assignments for Week 3
  o Complete the Student Information and Preference Form and post this on NYU Classes by COB on Tuesday, Sept. 20.
  o Teams will be posted on NYU Classes by Friday, Sept. 23. Once you have received your team assignments, please schedule a team meeting that is purely about getting to know each other. See handout, if you wish, for sample questions and topics to address.
  o Reading for class discussion: Flawless Consulting (read in this order): Preface to the third edition, chapter 19, and then chapters 1, 2 and 3.

Week 3 – September 26th: Introduction to the Consulting Process
You will come to class knowing your project teams. Overview of consulting, based on readings. Prepare for initial client meeting, both as a class and in teams. What do you need to learn from this meeting? How can you help your client give you that information?

➢ Assignments for Week 4
  o All students: Flawless Consulting, chapters 4 and 5.
  o Team Assignments:
    ➢ Create an agenda and materials for your client kickoff meeting and submit to me by Wed, Oct. 5 for feedback and review.
    ➢ Reach out to your client and schedule a client kickoff meeting during the period from Oct 10 - Oct 15. I must be present at the meeting (I will give you my availability).
    ➢ All teams should have met with their clients prior to the next class. Submit: 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.

October 3 and 10: No class

Week 4 – October 17th: Developing a Client-Team Work Agreement
Each teams will present on the results of their kickoff client meetings. Beginning this week we will focus on creating a client-team work agreement and an internal/team workplan.

➢ Assignment for Week 6:
  o As first step toward developing full work agreement, teams should prepare a draft document including: statement of the problem, objective of project,
information needed, boundaries of the project, final product and interim deliverables. **These must be emailed to me by Fri. Oct 28.**

**Week 5 – October 24th: Special Session on Project Management**
NYU Wagner will be offering a session on Project Management, during the regular Capstone class meeting time. The mandatory session will be led by Will Carlin who is a subject matter expert on project management.

**Week of October 31st:**
No class. Each team should schedule a meeting with me to discuss feedback on the early draft of the work agreement.

**Week 6 – November 7th: The Contracting Process**
We will continue to discuss work agreements, workplans, and how they are used as a part of the contracting process. Teams will have time in class to work on these deliverables. In addition, we will discuss ethics-related issues in Capstone.

- **Assignment for Week 7:**
  - Draft of full client-team work agreement (adding client support and involvement, and set of tasks) and draft of internal workplan. **These must be emailed to me by Fri. Nov 11.**

**Week 7 – November 14th: Prepare for Client Negotiations**
Each team presents their draft work agreement as rehearsal for presentation to and negotiation with the client. Team meetings to incorporate feedback into plan.

- **Assignment for Week 8:** Schedule and meet with your client to negotiate the work agreement. This could involve in-person meetings or could be done by phone.

**Week 8 – November 21st: Team Charters**
Teams that have held client meetings present the results. We will begin working on 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 Week 9:**
  - Final work agreement due Nov 28. This should be signed by the client and team.
  - Additional readings on teams, TBD.

**Week 9 – November 28th: Team Management**
Those teams that have met with clients present the results of the meeting. Discussion of team dynamics, including working in diverse teams. Continue work on team charters.

- **Assignments for Week 10:**
  - Team charter due.
  - Flawless Consulting, chapters 10 and 13

**Week 10 – December 5th: Data Gathering Methodologies**
Review of work and relationship with client thus far. Each team will present particular issues they face and their plans to develop and sustain relationship going forward. Also we will discuss data gathering methods; we will focus on the tools you intend to use, but could include: interviewing, surveys, observation, literature review, and focus groups.

- **Individual Assignment for End of Semester**
  - End-of-semester written self-assessment, peer review of team members and feedback for me on the course.

**Week 11 – December 12th: Reflective Practice**
I will review feedback to me about the course. Also, I will meet with each team individually to review progress, discuss results of peer evaluations, and highlight any issues for second semester. I will schedule an hour with each team which means some meetings will take place outside of class time.

**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. However, you must be available every Monday night during class time for as-needed problem-solving and skill-building sessions. For planning purposes, the following is a rough outline of the second semester schedule.

- First draft of final report – Late February
- Second draft of final report with draft slides – Late March
- Rehearsal of final presentation – Late March - Early April
- Final presentations to the clients – Mid April
- Debrief on client response to final presentations and necessary changes to final report – Late April
- Preparation for Capstone Expo – April
- Submit Final Project Report – Due May 5, 2017
- Capstone Expo: Tuesday, May 9, 2017
- Final Team, Self and Client Evaluations – Due May 12, 2017

In addition to the milestones identified above, all students **must** attend Presentation Skills training on March 6, 2017.