COURSE SUMMARY

Capstone is learning in action. As part of Wagner’s core curriculum, Capstone 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, the professor and one another.

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 several potential projects. Potential clients will present their projects to you on Monday, September 19th and Monday, September 26th during our class session time. I will ask you for your preferences, but to be very clear, I will create the teams based not only on your preferences, but also on your previous coursework, work and life experience, other expertise, and team size. Teams will be 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 US-based. This will necessitate use of skype, teleconferencing, etc. for client meetings depending on the facilities available to the client. Some projects may require travel for fieldwork, which will take place during Winter break. The school will cover financial support for the airfare if such work is necessary, but will not cover the full costs of travel. It may not be required or possible for all students to travel.

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

**EVALUATION and GRADING**

Students will receive 1.5 credits for the fall semester and 1.5 credits 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 yearlong 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 on:

- my assessment of a student's contribution
- assessments you give each other as part of the evaluation process at the end of the first and second semesters
- assessment scores clients give to teams regarding the quality of the written product and the team’s overall work

**Timeliness and meeting deadlines are extremely important and are important foundations of a student's contribution.** Participation includes presence, promptness, preparation and engagement. Students are expected to attend all classes and be on time (meaning: no more than one excused absence or lateness during the semester). Please email your professor before the class if you will be absent or late. Students with excessive absences or latenesses will see a reduction in their grade. In terms of timeliness, attending class on time is expected. Students who are excessively and/or consistently late and/or absent from class can expect to see their grade penalized by at least a third of a grade (from an A- to a B+). In addition, students and/or teams who submit any deliverables late will see their grades penalized by at least a third of a grade (from a B+ to a B). Lastly, individuals and/or teams who do not submit their draft final report or final report on time should expect to see their final grade lowered by one full letter grade for each late deliverable (for example, from A- to Bs). The draft final report is due on March 20th, 2017 and the final report is due on April 24th, 2017.

In addition, use of devices during class time should be limited to taking notes or displaying class materials only.

Students will be graded on both the products they deliver to their clients and evidence of progressive learning throughout the course. Fifty percent of a student's final grade is based on work products and deliverables identified in the syllabus due to the client as well as the professor. This portion of a student's grade will also be influenced by the submission of a draft report and a final report by the deadlines indicated as well as participation in the final client presentation and Capstone Expo. Fifty percent of a student’s grade is based on evidence of the individual student's learning during the course as demonstrated by timely arrival to class, attendance and contributions in class, assessments from other team members the student works with, the student’s ability to act on peer and faculty feedback and build an effective team and relationship with the client, the team and the instructor.
REQUIRED TEXTS

COURSE MILESTONES
The course has a series of milestones -- both activities and projects. Anticipated timeframes for some, but not all, submission are included below 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:

Fall 2016 Deadlines:
• Preference/information forms (September)
• Client presentations (September)
• Team charter (October)
• First Client Meeting (with professor) to 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)
• Negotiations with client to finalize Work Agreement & Work Plan (October)
• Preliminary presentation of project to class (October/November)
• Final, signed client-team contract and detailed team work plan (November)
• End-of-first semester self, team/peer, and course evaluations and discussion of team process and progress (December)

Spring 2017 Deadlines:
• First draft of final project report to faculty (February)
• Second draft of final project report to faculty (March)
• Rehearsal of client presentation before class/faculty for feedback before presentation to client (April)
• Final report and presentation to client (April/May)
• End-of-second semester reflection, positioning project in larger issue context (May)
• End-of-course self, team/peer, client and course evaluations (May)
• Presentation for Capstone Expo (May)

CLASS SCHEDULE: FIRST SEMESTER
University Academic Calendars: https://www.nyu.edu/registrar/calendars/university-academic-calendar.html

Several times during the year students must attend training and skill building courses instead of going to class. The offerings listed below are mandatory for students to attend. The currently scheduled dates for these offerings are:
1) October 24, 2016: Capstone Project Management Session. The session will be led by Will Carlin who has been teaching a course on this topic for years.
2) March 6, 2017: Presentation Skills Training Session
3) May 9, 2017: Capstone Expo, details to follow

The Capstone Expo is mandatory for all students. Students unable to attend the Expo will see an automatic reduction in their grade.

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 to in class.

Session I: Introductions (9/12/16)
Quick introductions followed by a review of the syllabus and clarification of deliverables and expectations. Discussion of potential client projects and preparation for potential client presentations - due diligence, student Q&A, etc.

Upcoming Assignments:

• Read: Professional Consulting, Chapters 1 & 2. Be prepared to discuss this reading in next class session.

• Students must submit a Due Diligence Analysis on all clients as well as 3 key questions they want to ask each potential client by no later than 9/16/16. (Professor will review all submissions and return to students by morning of 9/19).

• Review all potential client proposals and prepare to ask your questions during the presentation.

Session II: Defining the Role of a Consultant & Client Project Presentations - Part 1 (9/19/16)
Project presentations will be made by potential client organizations followed by student driven Q&A. This will be followed by in class discussion of the reading assignment.

Upcoming Assignments:

• Read: Professional Consulting, Chapter 3 and Appendix B (p. 250-257).

• Create and upload one document consisting of your Student Information & Preference Form and your resume, by 10/1 edc204@nyu.edu. Teams will be posted on the NYU Class site before class on 10/3.

Session III: Client Project Presentations - Part 2 (9/26/16)
Project presentations will be made by potential client organizations followed by student driven Q&A. This will be followed by in class discussion of the reading assignment and student submission of Information & Preference Forms.

Deliverable(s): Create one document consisting of your Student Information & Preference Form and your resume. Upload this one document to NYU Classes by 10/1. Teams will be posted on the NYU Class site by Monday, October 3rd.

Upcoming Assignments:

• Read: Professional Consulting, Chapters 4 & 5 (pages 70-79 only) and 7. Be prepared to discuss this reading in next class session.

• Bring your Due Diligence Analysis to the next class to share and discuss with your team.

Session IV: Preparing for the First Client Meeting, First Team Meeting, Discussion of Team Charter, Reviewing Elements of Good Work Agreements (Engagement Proposal) & Next Steps (10/3/16)
Students should check the class site to confirm what team they have been assigned to. We will discuss the reading, next steps, including writing the team charter, preparation for first client meeting, work agreements, and project plans. We will also discuss the elements of a successful client-team Work Agreement. 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?

**Deliverable(s):** Students will meet in teams to: 1) schedule a get-together, to happen on or before October 14th, that is purely about getting to know each other and building team; 2) identify all times that overlap with professor’s availability (shared below), that can be offered to the client to schedule the first client meeting; 3) email client to schedule first meeting, offering potential meeting times as determined in #2; 4) prepare draft team charter and 5) prepare for the initial client meeting. Before end of this session, teams will email professor responses to items 1 and 2 and cc professor on item 3 on deliverable listed above.

Each team should schedule the client meeting to last for approximately 60 minutes. Teams should prepare and share the agenda for the meeting with the client in advance of the meeting. In order to schedule the meeting, you must do the following:

Please ask your clients to hold as many of the times available below as work with the team’s schedule. Then send an email to Kate at vaehamilton917@gmail.com to confirm which time works best for the professor. Once Kate confirms the time for the client meeting you can email the client and confirm the meeting time. Client meetings will be scheduled on a first come, first serve basis so I encourage you to submit your request to Kate as soon as possible to secure your first choice.

**Professor Hamilton’s Availability:**

October 4th: 9AM-10AM; 11AM-12PM; 1PM-2PM

October 5th: 9AM-10AM; 11AM-12PM

October 14th: 9AM-10AM; 11AM-12PM; 1PM-2PM

**Upcoming Assignment(s):**

- Read: Professional Consulting, Chapters 5 (pages 82-95 only), 6 and review Appendix B (p 250-257). Be prepared to discuss this reading in next class session.

- By no later than 10/4/16 Teams need to have sent an email to edc204@nyu.edu with the following information: 1) draft of team charter and 2) date confirmed with client and aligned with professor schedule for first client meeting.

- By no later than 10/28/16 all teams need to submit a 2-page memo summarizing the team’s findings from their assessment meeting, including a clear statement of the problem. This means all teams must have first meeting with client in time to meet this submission deadline-no exceptions

**Session V: No Classes (10/10/16)**

Per decision by the University there will be no classes on this day
Upcoming Assignment(s):

- Teams will submit finalized Team Charters and 2-page memo summarizing the team’s findings from their client assessment meeting, including a clear statement of the problem to the professor via email by 10/28/16.
- Teams will also submit their first draft of their Work Agreements to professor via email by 10/28/16.
- Teams will submit their draft Work Plan to professor via email by 10/28/16.
- By no later than 10/28/16, teams should schedule a 45-minute meeting or call to review the final Work Agreement and Work Plan with client to occur in one of the following windows of time:
  - November 7th between 10AM-12PM or 4PM-5PM
  - November 8th between 1PM-3PM
  - November 9th between 9:30AM-11AM

The professor will attend by calling in so please set up a conference number for this meeting. Please ask your clients to hold as many of the times available below as work with the team’s schedule. Then send an email to Kate at vaehamilton917@gmail.com to confirm which time works best for the professor. Once Kate confirms the time for the client meeting you can email the client and confirm the meeting time. Client meetings will be scheduled on a first come, first serve basis so I encourage you to submit your request to Kate as soon as possible to secure your first choice.

Session VI: Reviewing Elements of Good Work Plans & Finalizing Team Charters (10/17/16)
We will review the assigned reading. We will also discuss the elements of a successful (internal) Work Plan. Students will also work in their teams to finalize their team charter (incorporating feedback if relevant); draft their client work agreement and work plan and prepare for their second client meeting.

Session VII: Capstone Project Management Session (10/24/16)
This session is mandatory and will be led by Will Carlin who has been teaching a course on this topic for years.

Upcoming Assignment(s):

- Teams must submit finalized Work Agreements and finalized Work Plan to professor via email no later than 11/4/16.
- The Final Work Agreement and Work Plan must be submitted to the client, copying the professor, by no later than 11/10/16.

Session VIII: Discussing Initial Client Meetings, Common Challenges in Capstone & Finalizing Client Work Agreements & Work Plans (10/31/16)
Teams will present their summary of 2-page assessment memo to the class. We will discuss some common challenges in Capstone (i.e. ethics, etc.).

Deliverable(s): During class teams will present summary of 2-page memo to class. Each team will get 10-12 minutes to present and 3-5 minutes to respond to questions. Teams should present a summary of their client project to the class, outlining background of their organization, problem team is working on and work planned to accomplish project goals.
• Read: Professional Consulting, Chapters 8 (pages 132-136 only). Also read Creating and Implementing a Data Collection Plan: http://www.strengtheningnonprofits.org/resources/e-learning/online/datacollection/Print.aspx. Be prepared to discuss this reading in the next class session.

• Work Agreements and Work Plans must be signed by the client, all members of the team and then submitted to the professor by no later than 11/10/16. Teams should work with the client to negotiate and finalize Client requested revisions to Work Agreements and Work Plans in order to meet the 11/10/16 submission deadline. This could involve additional in-person meetings or could be done by email and/or phone.

Session IX: Review of Data Gathering Challenges/Best Practices & Individual Team Check-Ins with Professor (11/7/16)
We will review the assigned reading. We will also discuss challenges and best practices around obtaining and managing data. Teams will also meet individually for a check in with the professor during class time to discuss any questions or challenges teams may be having. Teams not meeting with professor may use class time for a Team Meeting.

Upcoming Assignment(s):
In preparation for Session XI read the following articles, reports, etc. and be prepared to discuss these readings in the next class

Overviews:

Leadership & Succession:
“The Nonprofit Leadership Deficit” https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_nonprofit_leadership_development_deficit

Fundraising:
“UnderDeveloped” http://www.haasjr.org/resources/underdeveloped

Operations:
“The Nonprofit Starvation Cycle” https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_nonprofit_starvation_cycle

Impact:
“Non-profit leadership: Emerging Themes Impact and Measurement”

Session X: Team Meeting Time (11/14/16)
No class. Teams will meet independently to work on projects.

Session XI: Typical Challenges Facing Social Enterprises (11/21/16)
In this session we will discuss key challenges facing social enterprises, review the readings as well as leverage experiences students are having working with their clients. All students are responsible for completing the reading,
but if students are unable to attend this session due to holiday travel plans please email the professor by no later than October 28th indicating this fact.

**Session XII: Team Meeting Time (11/28/16)**
No class. Teams will meet independently to work on projects.

**Upcoming Assignment(s):**

- Read: Professional Consulting, Chapters 8 (pages 137-151 only). Be prepared to discuss reading in the next class session.

Teams must also schedule their final Client Presentation by no later than 2/10/17. Each client meeting should be scheduled to last approximately 90 minutes, comprised of: 60 mins for your presentation and 30 mins for Q&A. The professor must be present at the final Client Presentation. Please ask your clients to hold as many of the times available below as work with the team’s schedule. Then send an email to Kate at vaehamilton917@gmail.com to confirm which time works best for the professor. Once Kate confirms the time for the client meeting you can email the client and confirm the meeting time. Client meetings will be scheduled on a first come, first serve basis, so I encourage you to submit your request to Kate as soon as possible.

**Professor Hamilton’s Availability for Final Presentations:** April 17th, April 19th, April 21st, May 1st or May 5th: 9 AM-11:30 AM

**Session XIII: Self Evaluations, Team Evaluations & Client Evaluations (12/5/16)**
We will discuss the importance and value of evaluations in the Capstone process. We will also review how the process for analyzing your individual and team feedback will work and prepare for our next class.

**Upcoming Assignment(s):**

- Be prepared to discuss and utilize the readings below in the next class session.

  https://hbr.org/2002/09/a-better-way-to-deliver-bad-news?cm_sp=Topics--Links--Read%20These%20First

- **Reading #2:** Liane Davey, Harvard Business Review, “Deliver Feedback That Sticks”
  https://hbr.org/2015/08/deliver-feedback-that-sticks

**Deliverable(s):** Students will complete all evaluations by end of class session.

**Session XIV: Assessment of Client Project, Team Dynamics & Review of MY Feedback (12/12/16)**
We will talk about strategies to manage any problems that you are having with your projects at this point and identify any special needs that you may have. We will revisit Team Charters and discuss how well they have served each team. Revisions will be made if necessary. Each team will review and discuss feedback they have individually received as well as strategies they will put in place to improve performance if needed. Teams will also receive MY feedback from clients. We will review the Spring Schedule.