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

CAPSTONE: ADVANCED PROJECTS IN
FINANCE, POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

Note: This syllabus may be revised due to changing team and project circumstances.

Fall 2017
Mondays 6:45 – 8:25
NYU Bobst Library-LL1-49
Office Hrs: By appointment only

Professor Erica Coleman Hamilton  Email: edc204@nyu.edu

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

A. CONTENT
Students should demonstrate the ability to:
● understand the policy and/or management context for their project;
● be familiar with relevant specialized vocabularies;
● draw on critical research related to their content area;
● connect their project with previous coursework in their broader program and specialization.

B. PROCESS
Overall, students should demonstrate a capacity for flexibility and resilience, as shown by adapting to changing and complex circumstances, balancing competing demands, accepting uncertainty and ambiguity, and knowing when to consult with their Capstone instructor.

1. Project Management
Students should demonstrate the ability to:
● frame and refine the problem presented by the client;
● develop a contract with the client including scope, timeline and deliverables;
● develop an internal project workplan;
● meet deadlines and monitor their progress against the contract and workplan;
● revise contract and workplan as necessary.
2. **Client Management**
   Students should demonstrate the ability to:
   - negotiate a contract with their client;
   - develop and sustain a relationship with their client;
   - maintain regular and productive communication with the client;
   - solicit and integrate feedback from the client on design and deliverables;
   - submit deliverables on time.

3. **Team Management**
   Students should demonstrate the ability to:
   - diagnose and attend to interpersonal dynamics;
   - define roles and useful division of labor;
   - manage assignments and accountability;
   - advocate points of view and negotiate differences of opinion;
   - solicit and offer feedback;
   - appreciate and learn from cultural and other differences.

C. **RESEARCH**
   Students should demonstrate the ability to:
   - identify and synthesize existing research relevant to the project
   - identify and implement appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative data gathering methods;
   - identify and implement appropriate data analysis procedures;
   - determine findings;
   - develop useful recommendations and/or tools and resources based on findings.

D. **COMMUNICATION**
   Students should demonstrate the ability to:
   - synthesize and summarize large amounts of data and information;
   - prepare clear and well-argued written deliverables tailored to the client’s needs;
   - prepare clear and well-argued verbal presentations tailored to the client’s needs.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Potential clients will present their projects to you in the first couple of weeks in class. Then I will ask you to fill out an Info and Preference Form in which you will rank the preferences and also provide background on your previous coursework, work experience, various forms of expertise, time availability, etc. My job is to create teams that can successfully complete the project but I will also take your preferences into account. 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.
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. Fifty percent 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. 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, their 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


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.

• Potential client presentations (September/October);
• Team formation (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 (September/October);
• Preliminary client-team contract or work agreement; presentation to class/faculty for feedback prior to giving to client (October/November);
• Negotiations with client to finalize contract (October/November);
• Final, signed client-team contract and detailed team workplan (November);
• Team charter (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 (early March);
• Second draft of final project report to faculty (late March /April);
• 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 and celebration (May);
• End-of-course self, team /peer, client and course evaluations (early May);
• Presentation for Capstone Expo (May). (The Capstone Expo is mandatory for all students. Students unable to attend the Expo will see an automatic reduction in their grade.)
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.

CLASS SCHEDULE

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

We will meet weekly as a class or in teams unless agreed beforehand.

The sequence of classes, and due dates for assignments, could change depending in part on your meetings with clients and the substance of your projects. Specific requirements for each class will be posted on NYU Classes and emailed to you with enough lead time to prepare. NYU Classes takes precedence over what is written here.

SPECIAL SESSIONS

Mandatory Session on Project Management by Will Carlin-October 16, 2017

Conducting an Effective Literature Review- 11/6
This year we are working with Eric Barends, Director of the Center for Evidence Based Management (CEBMa), to deliver a module on how to effectively search for relevant research papers in a research database – a skill essential for conducting a literature review. To determine whether the module is effective, we are going to conduct a group randomized trial. Our class will participate in a face-to-face session with the same basic material as an on-line version that would take one class period. The primary outcome metric for this trial is whether students can independently conduct a systematic, transparent and verifiable search in online research databases.

In October, a baseline assessment for the teams assigned to the on-line module and the face-to-face training will be conducted by means of an online quiz. After completion of the online module and face-to-face classes, all students (including those in the control group) will be invited to complete a second online assessment. Finally, after Capstone is over, all literature reviews will be gathered from the various projects and assessed blindly by two external reviewers independently of each other.
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<tr>
<th>CLASS #</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC(S)</th>
<th>CLASS OVERVIEW</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENTS</th>
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| 1       | 9/11  | Introductions, Review of Fall Syllabus & Preparation for Potential Client Presentations | 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. | • 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 5PM on 9/15. (Professor will review all submissions and return to students with comments by morning of 9/18)  
• Review all potential client proposals and prepare to ask your questions during the presentations that will begin on 9/18.  
• Reading for next class: Professional Consulting, Chapters 1 & 2. Be prepared to discuss this reading in our next class session. |
| 2       | 9/18  | Potential Client Presentations-Part 1                                      | Project presentations will be made by potential client organizations followed by student driven Q&A.                                                                                                                                 | • Reading for next class: Professional Consulting, Chapter 3 and Appendix B (p. 250-257). Be prepared to discuss this reading in next class session |
| 3       | 9/25  | Potential Client presentations-Part 2 & Defining the Role of a Consultant | 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.                                                                 | • Submit Student Information and Preference, Resume and Writing Sample as ONE DOCUMENT by 5PM on 9/27. Post on NYU Classes. Teams will be posted by 10/2.  
• Bring your Due Diligence Analysis on the client you are assigned to the next class to share and discuss with your team.  
• Reading for next class: Professional Consulting, Chapters 4 & 5 (pages 70-79 only) & 7. Be prepared to discuss this reading in next class session |
| 4       | 10/2  | Working Together Effectively as a Team & Preparing for The First Client Meeting & First Team Meeting | Students should check the class site to confirm what team they have been assigned to. We will discuss the reading, next steps and the elements of creating successful plans and documents to manage the engagement. We will also discuss the approach for teams to write the team charter, preparing for first client meeting and creating work agreements and project plans. Teams will also have their first meeting, in class, to prepare for their initial client meeting. Class discussion will include a focus on considering essential questions such as:  
- What do you need to learn from this meeting?  
- How can you help your client give you that information?  
• During the team meeting in class the team will:  
  • Schedule one team get-together purely about getting to know each other and send professor an email confirming date and time of meeting before end of class on 10/2. See handout posted on NYU Classes for sample questions and topics (if you wish)  
  • Send an email to the professor with the date that has been chosen for the team get-together, to happen on or before October 11th by no later than 10/2.  
  • end an email to the client to offer times available for the 1st meeting that happen between 10/5-10/16 (schedule meeting for 60 minutes) during professor's availability and the availability of all team members. Please cc the professor on your email. All team members should attend the meeting in person. My availability is:  
    • October 4th 9AM-1030AM  
    • October 6th 9AM-1030AM (phone only)  
    • October 13th 10AM-130PM  
    • October 16th 9AM-12PM  
• Reading for next class: 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. |
| NA      | 10/9  | NO CLASS. FALL BREAK.                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Teams-Please complete the following tasks:  
(1) confirm and send meeting maker for the 1st client meeting (to occur between 10/5-10/16) by no later than 10/9                                                                                                                      |
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<th>Week</th>
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<th>Session</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10/16</td>
<td><strong>Required</strong> Mandatory Session on Project Management by Will Carlin</td>
<td>Do not come to regular classroom. Join students from other Capstone sections in Eisner &amp; Lubin Auditorium at Kimmel. Attendance will be taken. <strong>Teams-Please complete the following tasks:</strong> 1) Submit draft Project Plan by 5PM on 10/28 2) Teams should have scheduled a 45-minute meeting to review the final Work Agreement and Work Plan with the client by 10/20. The professor must attend this meeting and will do so by phone so please set up a conference number for the meeting/call. At least 2 members of the team should attend the meeting in person. The meeting needs to occur in one of the following windows of time: - <strong>October 30th 9AM-11AM</strong> - <strong>October 31st 9AM-10AM</strong> - <strong>November 3rd 10AM-1PM</strong> <strong>Readings for next class:</strong> - Eisenhardt, Kahwajy &amp; Bourgeois. 1997. How management teams can have a good fight. Harvard Business Review.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>10/23</td>
<td>Preparing for Initial Client Meetings, Common Challenges in Capstone &amp; Finalizing Client Work Agreements &amp; Work Plans</td>
<td>We will review the assigned reading. We will also discuss the elements of a successful (internal) Project Plan and students will continue drafting their client work agreement and project plan and prepare for their second client meeting. We will also have individual team meetings with professor to check-in. <strong>Submit draft Work Agreements (including required client support, involvement and tasks) to professor via NYU Classes by 5 PM 10/24. Professor will return revisions by no later than 10/27.</strong> <strong>Teams send finalized Work Agreement and Project Plans to clients by no later than 5PM 10/27 and cc professor or email.</strong> <strong>Teams must return Work Agreement signed by each team member and client sponsor and project manager to professor by email by no later than 5PM 11/6.</strong> <strong>Prepare and print responses to Leadership Compass available at:</strong> <a href="http://www.bethechangeconsulting.com/sites/default/files/worksheets/leadership-compass-self-assessment.pdf">http://www.bethechangeconsulting.com/sites/default/files/worksheets/leadership-compass-self-assessment.pdf</a> <strong>Reading for next class: DiStefano, J.J. &amp; Maznevski, M.L. 2000. Creating value with diverse teams in global management. Organizational Dynamics 29 (1).</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>10/30</td>
<td>Team dynamics</td>
<td>Class discussion will focus on strategies and resources to build and strengthen teams. Teams will finalize their team charter (incorporating feedback-if relevant) as work together to share and discuss Leadership Compass results. <strong>Submit finalized Project Plan, Team Charter and Work Agreement to professor by 5PM 11/2 via NYU Classes.</strong></td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>11/6</td>
<td>Conducting an Effective Literature Review</td>
<td>Eric Barends will be presenting (see note above) <strong>More information will be shared closer to the date of the session.</strong></td>
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| 11/13 | 9 | Team Presentations of Client Projects: Teams will have 10 minutes to 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 and draft project plans. After each presentation each team will have approximately 5 minutes to take questions from classmates. Teams will also work to finalize their team charter (incorporating feedback if relevant); draft work agreement and project plan as well as prepare for their second client meeting.

- We will review the assigned reading.
- Reading for next class: 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](http://www.strengtheningnonprofits.org/resources/e-learning/online/datacollection/Print.aspx). Be prepared to discuss this reading in the next class session.

| 11/20 | 10 | Review of Data Gathering Challenges/Best Practices & Data collection Methods: Surveys, Interviews & Focus Groups: We will discuss challenges and best practices around obtaining and managing data as well as determining the best data gathering method to use to collect information. We will also have individual team meetings with professor to check-in.

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

| 11/27 | NA | NO CLASS: Happy Thanksgiving

| 12/4 | 11 | Self Evaluations, Team Evaluations & Review of Spring Syllabus: We will review the Spring Schedule. 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. 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.

- Students will complete evaluations for team members as well as self-evaluations by 5PM 11/21.
- Students will receive evaluation results by 12/1 and should review results and draft at least 3 new behaviors they will adopt to address challenges/concerns. Responses due ot professor by 5PM on 12/4.
- 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 work together during class time to:
  1. share themes of individual feedback received
  2. share plan to address challenge areas for individual feedback
  3. discuss overall Team challenges and
  4. revise Team Charter to improve team functioning and efficiency
- Teams will send revised Team Charters to professor via NYU Classes by no later than 5PM 12/8
- Teams must schedule their final Client Presentation by no later than 2/9/18. 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. **Professor Hamilton’s Availability for Final Presentations:** April 16th, April 20th, April 23rd, April 27th: 11AM-2PM In order to confirm final presentation times please do the following:

1. Ask your clients to hold as many of the times available below as work with your team’s schedule by no later than 1/26/18
2. Once you client has confirmed what times they can hold send this information via email to Kate at vaehamilton917@gmail.com (professor’s assistant) and cc the professor by no later than 1/29
3. Kate will confirm which time works best for the meeting by no later than 2/2. 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.
4. Confirm the final time for the meeting with the client and please advise them this time cannot be changed. If they are worried about only having one time scheduled for the meeting then please let Kate and the professor know and we will hold two times on the calendar for the meeting.

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<td>12/11</td>
<td>Individual Meetings with Professor to Check in (as needed)</td>
<td>We will have individual team meetings with professor to check-in, as needed. • Teams need to request a meeting by no later than 5PM 11/27 by sending an email Kate at <a href="mailto:vaehamilton917@gmail.com">vaehamilton917@gmail.com</a> and cc the professor. In your email please indicate the topics the team would like to discuss in our meeting.</td>
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