Instructors Information

- Instructor: Alexandra Ruiz
  - Email: ar5988@nyu.edu

- Instructor: Sabine Toussaint
  - Email: st427@nyu.edu

- Office Address: Email for location
- Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Information

- Class Meeting Times: Mondays 6:45 PM – 8:25 PM
- Class Location: Silver Rm. 507

Course Description

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.
Course and 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.

a. 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.

b. 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.

c. 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.

Learning Assessment Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Learning Objective</th>
<th>Corresponding Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Develop an internal project workplan</td>
<td>Team workplan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negotiate a contract with their client</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advocate points of view and negotiate differences of opinion</td>
<td>Self and team peer evaluations</td>
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**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 US-based. This will necessitate use of skype /teleconferencing /tele video conferencing for client meetings, depending on the facilities available to the client. Some projects may require travel for field work 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.
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 yearlong project. We 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 we feel that is warranted. We will make this judgment based both on our 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 Readings

The McKinsey Way, Ethan Rasiel. NOTE: The book is available at the NYU bookstore, but you may be able to get the book at a better rate on Amazon.

There will be other readings assigned occasionally.

Course Milestones

The course has a series of milestones – both activities and products -- that will serve as interim work products. We’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.

These milestones include:

- Potential client presentations (September);
- 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 (February/March);
- 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 and celebration (May);
- End-of-course self, team/peer, client and course evaluations (end April/beginning of May);
- Presentation for Capstone Expo (May).

**Class Schedule Overview**

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 agreed in class.

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.**

**Fall Semester**

**PHASE: Creating Teams**

09/10/18
Week 1
- Overview and introductions: Get to know each other a little. Review the syllabus and clarify
- Course structure and expectations.
- Some team building exercises.
- Handout beginning of survey.

09/17/18
Week 2

Topics:
- Client presentations
• Discussion of projects

Assignments Due:
• Hand out Student Information and Preference Form
• Hand in your resume.
• Preference form must be submitted with resume in one document by and post this on NYU Classes by 9/25.
• Discussion of role identification: Identify roles that your team project will need and draft descriptions of those roles due 10/1
• Come with thoughts and questions on pros and cons of the projects.
• Due Friday 9/25: Student Information and Preference Form. Attach resume and writing sample and make this ONE DOCUMENT. Post on NYU Classes. Teams will be posted by 9/27.

09/24/18
Week 3

Topics:
• Client presentations
• Discussion of projects

Assignments Due:
• Come with thoughts and questions on pros and cons of the projects.
• Role identification: Identify roles that your team project will need and draft descriptions of those roles due 10/1
• Come with thoughts and questions on pros and cons of the projects.
• Due Friday 9/25: Student Preference Form. Attach resume and writing sample and make this ONE DOCUMENT. Post on NYU Classes. Teams will be posted by 9/27.

PHASE: Launch and Planning

10/1/18
Week 4

Topics:
• Introduction to consulting
• Preparation for entry meeting with client
• Decide on group roles

Assignments Due:
  o **Individual:** The McKinsey Way, Ethan Rasiel; Chapter 1, 5
o **Team:** Teams will be posted on NYU Classes by [September 27]. Team assignments:
  o Schedule one get-together purely about getting know each other. See handout for sample questions and topics (if you wish).
  o Schedule initial client meeting after Oct. 1. I must be present (I will provide availability).
  o Bring in background information on your client for team and class discussion.
  o Agree on team member assignments for each of the defined roles [due October 1st].

10/8/18
NO CLASS. CLASS MEETS TUESDAY.

10/9/18
Week 5
  * CAPSTONE CLASS MEETS (This is a legislative day: Classes meet on a Monday schedule.)

Topics:
  * Team dynamics 1

Assignments Due:
  * The McKinsey Way, Ethan Rasiel; Chapter 8 Conducting Interviews
  * **Team:** Teams are scheduling and preparing for client meeting.
  * **Teams that have met with their client:** 1-2-page memo summarizing the team’s findings from their assessment meeting, including a clear statement of the problem. Be prepared to present to class.

PHASE: Contract Negotiation and Skill Building

10/15/18
Week 6

Topics:
  * Intro to contracts and work plans

Assignments Due:
  * Teams that have met with client will present to class on the entry meeting;
  * Teams that have met with client will draft contract;
10/22/18
Week 7

Topics:

- **Required session** on project management (6:45–8:25 pm at NYU Law School, Tishman Auditorium)

10/29/18
Week 8

Topics:

- Team dynamics 2

Assignments Due:

- **Individual:**
  - Leadership Compass
  - *The McKinsey Way, Ethan Rasiel*; Chapter 13 Working with Clients

- **Teams**
  - Teams that have met with client will present to class on the entry meeting;
  - Teams that have met with client will draft contract;
  - Teams will present contract to class.

11/5/18
Week 9

Topics:

- Data collection: Surveys

Assignments Due:

- **Individual:**
  - *The McKinsey Way, Ethan Rasiel*; Chapter 7 Research; Chapter 9 Brainstorming
  - Complete on-line module on literature reviews.

PHASE: Begin project work, Continue with skill-building

11/12/18
Week 10

Topics:

- Data collection: Interviews and focus groups
Assignments Due:

- **Individual**: Self, team peer, and course evaluations.
- **Teams**:
  - Teams that have met with client will draft contract;
  - Teams will present contract to class.
  - Contracts should be signed by 11/12 if at all possible.

11/19/18
Week 11

Topics:

- Literature reviews

Assignments Due:

- **Individual**: Self, team peer, and course evaluations.
- **Teams**:
  - Teams that have met with client will draft contract;
  - Teams will present contract to class.

11/26/18
Week 12

Topics:

- Team updates;
- Cross-team meetings as indicated

Assignments Due:

- **Individual**: Self, team peer, and course evaluations.
- **Teams**:
  - Teams that have met with client will draft contract;
  - Teams will present contract to class.

PHASE: Evaluation and feedback

12/3/18
Week 13

Topics:

- Meetings with teams to discuss peer feedback
12/10/18
Week 14

Topics:
- Meetings with teams to discuss peer feedback

Spring 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. However, as needed, we will schedule problem-solving or skill-building sessions, so you must be available every Monday night during class time. Also, for planning purposes, I’ve noted here some potential deadlines, but these are preliminary and could change.

PHASE: Project Work

1/28/19

Topics:
- Team updates;
- Discuss spring schedule
- Data analysis & report formatting

Assignments Due:
- **Individual:** The McKinsey Way, Ethan Rasiel; Chapter 10 Making Presentations; Chapter 11 Charts
- **Teams:**
  - Team prepare updates for class
  - Review and revise team charter

2/4/19

2/11/19

2/18/19
NO CLASS. PRESIDENTS DAY.

2/25/19

Assignments Due:
- Outline of report due.
PHASE: Project Work and Report Writing

3/4/19

Topics:
- **Required session** on presentation skills (location tba)

Assignments Due:
- Teams schedule final presentation or client. I must be present (and will provide my availability.)

3/11/19

Assignments Due:
- First draft of report due

3/18/19
NO CLASS. SPRING BREAK

3/25/19

PHASE: Report Writing and Presentation

4/1/19

Topics:
- Teams rehearse client presentations;
- Preparation for Expo

4/8/19

Topics:
- Teams rehearse client presentations;
- Preparation for Expo

Assignments Due:
- Second draft of report due
4/15/19

Topics:
- Teams rehearse client presentations;
- Preparation for Expo

Assignments:
- Self, team peer, and client evaluations due 4/22 or 4/29

PHASE: Conclusion! Evaluation and Feedback, Reflection and Celebration

4/22/19

Assignments Due:
- Third draft of report due
- Self, team peer, and client evaluations

4/29/19

Assignments Due:
- Self, team peer, and client evaluations

5/6/19

5/13/19

Topics:
- Last class: Reflect and celebrate.

5/14/19

Topics:
- CAPSTONE EXPO!

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by Wagner’s Academic Code. All Wagner students have already read and signed the Wagner Academic Oath. Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and
students in this class are expected to report violations to me. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with me.

**Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at NYU**

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) website](http://www.mosescenter.nyu.edu) and click on the Reasonable Accommodations and How to Register tab or call or email CSD at (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

**NYU’s Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays**

[NYU’s Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](http://www.nyu.edu/academics/calendar/policies/religion.html) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays that might coincide with exams to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.