CAPSTONE: Advanced Projects in Policy (and Management)
CAP-GP 3401-005 (6451)

Fall 2018 – Spring 2019
Mondays, 6:45 p.m. – 8:25 p.m.
Waverly Building, 24 Waverly Pl., Room 429
(Fall semester location only; Spring location TBA)

Instructor: Kevin Hansen
Adjunct Assistant Professor of Public Service
Contact: kevin.hansen@nyu.edu
Office Hours: After class and by appointment.

I. 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 projects.

II. 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 work plan;
   - meet deadlines and monitor their progress against the contract and work plan; and
   - revise contract and work plan 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 communications with the client;
   - solicit and integrate feedback from the client on design and deliverables; and
   - 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; and
   - 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; and
   - 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; and
   - 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>
<tr>
<td>Understand the policy and/or management context for their project</td>
<td>Interim and final products</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be familiar with relevant specialized vocabularies</td>
<td>Interim and final products</td>
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<tr>
<td>Draw on critical research related to their content area</td>
<td>Interim and final products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frame and refine the problem presented by the client</td>
<td>Signed contract with client</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a contract with the client including scope, timeline and deliverables</td>
<td>Signed contract with client</td>
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<td>Develop an internal project workplan</td>
<td>Team workplan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meet deadlines and monitor their progress against the contract and workplan</td>
<td>Signed contract and team workplan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negotiate a contract with their client</td>
<td>Signed contract with 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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<tr>
<td>Appreciate and learn from cultural and other differences</td>
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III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The class will involve presentations from the instructor, 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; and
- participation in preparation and presentation of findings.
Based on a competitive proposal submission process, I have identified an array of potential client projects for you. Potential clients will present their projects to you in the first several weeks in class. I will ask you for and consider your preferences, but I will ultimately create the teams based not only on your preferences, but also on other factors such as your previous coursework, work and life experience, skills, schedules and team size. I expect that all teams will be composed of 3-5 students.

If appropriate, Capstone teams may be reimbursed up to $500 for expenses such as reproduction, binding, local travel, and/or preparation of Capstone documents and display materials over the course of the year.

IV. 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, all capstone students receive a grade of “IP” (Incomplete Pass) to reflect the “work in progress” nature of the year-long project; do not be alarmed by this designation. I will assign final grades to our class at the end of the second semester based on two scores: Individual Class Contribution Score and Individual Team Project Score.

A. Individual Class Contribution Score
Thirty percent (30%) of your grade, or up to 85 possible points, will be based on your class contributions (as distinct from participation alone) and demonstrated individual learning throughout the course. This portion of your grade will primarily be assessed based on surveys completed by your peers. For the surveys, students will complete assessments of each teammate on a Likert scale, with responses being averaged and scaled. A small portion of the grade will be based on a class-wide survey that asks which of your peers most contributed to your learning, as scored based on the number of mentions a student receives.

B. Individual Team Project Score
Seventy percent (70%) of your letter grade for this year-long project will be based, first, on your team’s overall project performance, and, second, on your contributions to that performance.

Overall team project scores will be awarded out of 200 possible points based on an evaluation of team work products and deliverables to the client. This score will be based on work products identified in the milestones as well as any interim deliverables to the client or assigned by me.

Your individual team project score will either be the same score out of 200 points as your team’s overall score, or some partial fraction thereof. In considering whether or not to award you the full value of your overall team project score, I will be relying primarily on the end-of-semester assessments that your team members provide about you and the reduced share, if any, that they indicate you should receive. As an example, if a four-person team receives the maximum possible 200 points, but three team members indicate in surveys that the fourth team member only contributed 80% of a “fair share” of value to the project, then, to the extent that I assess the feedback to be appropriate, it is possible that three of the team members could receive 200 points, while the under-contributing team member could receive only 160 points (or, 80% of
200 possible points). Under no circumstances do I intend to assign any student with an individual team project score lower than that recommended by their peers.

The purpose of using a pro-rated team grading system is to more fairly allocate credit for your team’s work. In some instances, one team member may be vigorously pursuing an A, whereas another team member may place less importance on their course grade, being perfectly content with limiting their effort to the amount of work required to earn a B-. In my view, each student is welcome to their own preference here, as differences such as these are facts of life in the workplace. However, the result of these differing incentives in an academic team environment is predictable and problematic—tension is created between the students seeking an A, who end up doing substantially more work, and the student seeking a B-, who resents the pressure to continue working after reaching a B-level of work. Pro-rated team grading systems thereby more fairly allow and account for material differences in team member contributions.

C. Grading Scale
Below is the grading scale that I intend to use for our course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
<th>POINTS REQUIRED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
<td>277.875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93.5%</td>
<td>266.475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90.0%</td>
<td>256.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>249.375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83.5%</td>
<td>237.975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77.5%</td>
<td>220.875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
<td>209.475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>199.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of note, NYU Wagner does not honor an “A+,” so, if any of you receive one, consider the “+” to be honorary. The lowest grade received in my prior Capstone class was one B-, but this may or may not hold true for us.

D. NYU Wagner Grading Policies
For information on NYU Wagner’s other grading policies, see: https://wagner.nyu.edu/portal/students/policies/grading.

V. REQUIRED TEXTS

As of the writing of this syllabus, I do not expect that students of this section will be required to purchase any external texts in order to fulfill the requirements of the course.
All required readings and viewable content are expected to be publicly available, available through NYU's various information services, or be specifically uploaded to our NYU Classes website. Required readings will be added to the NYU Classes website at least one week prior to the next class session.

In addition to required readings, I will also occasionally list optional readings. The primary distinction between optional readings and required readings is that students will not be expected to have completed optional readings for purposes of class discussion, which will focus on required readings.

A handful of our readings will draw from one particular text: *Flawless Consulting*, 3rd edition, by Peter Block (2011). To the extent that the class is assigned required readings from this text, I will provide such sections as PDF excerpts. It is not necessary for any student of this course to purchase this book, but any student who seeks to obtain a greater understanding of consulting beyond the provided resources is welcome to buy it and read the full text.

**VI. COURSE MILESTONES**

The course has a series of milestones -- both activities and products -- that will serve as interim work products. Suggested time frames are provided in parentheses, but actual timing during the course of the year may vary depending on the specific situation of each team and client.

An illustrative list of these milestones include:

- Presentations by potential clients to students (September);
- Team formation (September);
- “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);
- Team charter (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);

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- 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-course self, team/peer, client and course evaluations (end April/beginning of May);
● End-of-second semester reflection and celebration (May);
● Presentation at Capstone Expo (May).

VII. CLASS SCHEDULE: FIRST SEMESTER

The list of weeks and topics that follows is preliminary and subject to change. Students should keep close track of announcements posted on NYU Classes and should expect to meet weekly as a class or team unless agreed-upon in class.

Twice during the year, we hold Capstone skills trainings during the Monday Capstone class time. These dates are:

- 10/22/18: Project Management. This will cover the basics of project management. This is required, unless students have taken the Project Management course.
- 3/4/19 (tentative date): Presentation Skills training. This is required: All students must be present. While students have received prior training, this session will focus on group presentations.

Also, Capstone Expo will be on Tuesday, 5/14. More information will be provided on the Capstone Expo closer to the event, but each team will be expected to use a poster board and other media, as necessary, to summarize their project for the Wagner and client community.

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Session #1 - Monday, 9/10: Introducing Capstone / Meet the Clients
Our first session will involve getting to know each other, setting expectations, previewing our year ahead, and viewing some initial presentations from our prospective clients. **All students should review the proposals for all prospective clients prior to class, prepare questions, and take extra care to be present and arrive on time for our early sessions**, as they will significantly inform and influence your year ahead.

- Guest Speakers:
  - 7:30 - 8:00 p.m.: Prospective Client #1
  - 8:00 – 8:30 p.m.: Prospective Client #2

- **Assignment for Session 2:**
  - Re-read all remaining client capstone proposals and prepare questions for the remaining presentations.

Session #2 - Monday, 9/17: Meet the Clients Part II
During our second session, we will host our final prospective client presentations.

- Guest Speakers:
  - 7:00 - 7:30 p.m.: Prospective Client #3
  - 7:30 - 8:00 p.m.: Prospective Client #4

- **Assignments for Session 3:**
Submit a copy of your resume to NYU Classes by **Friday, 9/21**. You will not be evaluated based on your resume, which is being requested only to assist me in creating balanced and effective teams.

Submit a copy of your Student Information and Preference Form by **Friday, 9/21**.

**Session #3 - Monday, 9/24: Overview of Consulting/ Prep for Client Meeting #1**
You will come to class knowing your teams. During our third session, we will debrief from our client presentations and talk broadly about consulting. Prepare for an 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 Session 4**
  - Readings (available under “Lessons” on NYU Classes):
  - Between Tuesday, 9/25 and Sunday, 10/7, as a team, complete the following:
    - Schedule an initial team get-together that is purely about getting to know each other, and email me a photo of the meet-up to share with the class.
    - Schedule an initial meeting with me and the client. The purposes of this meeting should be to introduce your team to the client team and to gather more information about the organization and their project. All team members and I should both be present for this meeting. I will share my availability with you in advance.

**Session #4 - Monday, 10/1: Effective Team-Building**
We will debrief from your team get-togethers and client meetings (if held yet), hear from a guest speaker, and discuss the readings (time permitting).

- **Guest Speaker:**
  - 7:00 p.m.: Allison Quigney, Director of Client Services, Public Works Partners

- **Assignments for Session #5**
  - After holding your client meeting, prepare and submit a summary memorandum documenting the meeting discussion, outcomes and next steps by Monday, 10/8.

**Rescheduled Session #5 – Tuesday, 10/9 (Monday Schedule): Client-Team Agreements**
Remaining teams will present debriefs on their initial client meetings. We will spend most of class discussing and working on your draft client-team work agreements.

- **Assignment for Session #6**
  - As a first step towards preparing your project planning documents, all teams should prepare a draft client-team agreement that describes: a statement of the problem, the objective(s) of your project, the information needed, the boundaries
of the project, the final product and all interim deliverables. **Draft client agreements must be uploaded to NYU Classes no later than Sunday, 10/15.**

- No assigned readings.

**Session #6 - Monday, 10/15: Developing Work Plans and Client Agreements**

We will hear from guest speakers from Karp Strategies, a consulting firm. Any remaining time will be dedicated to discussing and further fleshing out client-team agreements.

- **Guest Speaker:**
  - 7:00 – 7:30 p.m.: Rebecca Karp, Founder and Principal, and Joseph Sutkowi, Consultant, Karp Strategies.

- **Assignment for Session #7**
  - Readings: Review project management resources on NYU Classes.

**Special Session #7 - Monday, 10/22: Skills Training in Project Management**

Twice during the year, NYU Wagner holds mandatory Capstone skills trainings during the Monday Capstone class time. This session will cover the basics of project management and take place from 6:45-8:25 PM in the Tisch Auditorium of the NYU Law School.

- **Assignment for Session #8**
  - Revised draft of full client-team work agreement and draft of internal work plan (with detailed list and timeline of project tasks). These must be emailed to me by Sunday, 10/28. For sample client-team work agreements and work plans, see the examples on NYU Classes.

**Session #8 - Monday, 10/29: Project Work Planning and Client Negotiation**

Each team will present their draft client-team work agreement as a rehearsal for a presentation to and negotiation with the client. Teams will also separately present their internal work plans to the class. Guest speakers will be in attendance and will offer feedback.

- **Guest Speakers:**
  - 7:00 p.m.: Angela Wu and Patricia Ceccarelli, Managers, Guidehouse (formerly PwC Public Sector Consulting)

- **Assignments for Session #9:**
  - Schedule and negotiate your client-team agreement between Tuesday, 10/30, and Sunday, 11/11. Negotiations should be done in-person, and I must attend.
  - Reading:
    - Focus Group, Survey, Interview? Which is Right for Your Co-Curricular Program? University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Assessment Office, 2011.

**Session #9 - Monday, 11/5: Qualitative Research Methods**

Teams who have negotiated client scopes will present the results of the meeting. We will hear from a guest speaker on qualitative research methods.

- **Guest Speaker:**
  - 7:00 p.m.: Cliff Frasier, NYU Wagner Doctoral Student

- **Assignment for Session #10:**
Finalize written client-team agreements and internal team work plans, if not yet completed. Agreements should be signed by the client and team members; work plans should be retained and updated internally by the student team. **The signed client-team agreement and full preliminary work plan must be emailed to me or uploaded to NYU Classes by Sunday, 11/11.**

**Session #10 - Monday, 11/12: Literature Reviews and Research**
Additional teams present and reflect on the results of their client-team negotiations. A guest speaker will present on conducting literature reviews and other background research.

- **Guest Speaker:**
  - 7:00 p.m.: Andrew Battista, NYU Wagner Research Librarian

- **Assignment for Session #11:**
  - Bring a list of issues to be considered in your team charters to Session #11
  - **Readings:**

**Session #11: Monday, 11/19 – Team-Building Activity**
We will complete an in-class team-building activity. After, you will have time for team meetings, and I will be available as needed.

- **In-Class Activity**
  - 7:00 p.m.: Team-building activity

- **Assignments for Session #12**
  - Final drafts of team charters must be signed and uploaded to NYU Classes prior to the start of class in Session #10 by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, 11/25.

**Session #12: Monday, 11/26 - Project Work Time / Possible Guest Speaker**
If needed, guest speakers on special topics. Team meetings. I will be available as needed.

**Session #13: Monday, 12/3 - Special Topics/Work Session**
If needed, guest speakers on special topics. Team meetings. I will be available as needed.

- **Assignment:**
  - All teams will be expected to submit an initial draft of their final paper outline and a preliminary literature review by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, December 9.

**Session #14: Monday, 12/10 - Special Topics/Work Session**
I will review feedback provided to me about the course’s first semester. Also, I will meet with each team individually to review progress, discuss results of peer evaluations, and highlight any issues for the second semester.

**VIII. CLASS SCHEDULE: SECOND SEMESTER**

(Preliminary)

During this semester, much of the time will be set aside for teams to meet on their own or with me. Typically, we will begin by allowing each team to briefly provide a status update on their
projects, followed by team work time, with me rotating around the room to check in with each team on their progress. 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, or invite special guest speakers, and you must plan to be available every Monday night during class time unless and until such sessions are cancelled.

Session #14: Monday, 1/28  
Teams will provide updates, have work time and meet with professor as appropriate.

No Class: Monday, 2/4  
Teams to meet independently as needed and email the professor with a progress update.

Session #15: Monday, 2/11  
Teams will provide updates, have work time and meet with professor as appropriate.

No Class: Monday, 2/18 (Presidents Day)  
No class due to the holiday.

Session #16: Monday, 2/25  
Teams will provide updates, have a limited amount of work time and meet with professor as appropriate.

Special Session #17: Monday, 3/4 - Presentation Skills  
(Special Location: TBD)  
This date, instead of meeting, students will attend a required session on presentation skills by Will Carlin. Instead of our regular classroom, join students from other Capstone sections.

Session #18: Monday, 3/11  
Teams will provide updates, have work time and meet with professor as appropriate.

- Assignment:
  - Initial drafts of final reports and presentations must be submitted prior to 5:00 p.m. on 3/21.

No Class: Monday, 3/18 (Spring Break)  
No class due to NYU spring break.

Session #19: Monday, 3/25  
Discussion of final papers, final presentations, and our remaining class schedule. Much of the class will be dedicated to meetings with me to discuss issues with your draft papers and presentations.

No Class: Monday, April 1  
No class scheduled – instructor will be available for individual team meetings by appointment.

Session #20: Monday, April 8  
Teams deliver presentations in-class as practice for future client presentations.
• **Assignment:**
  - Revised drafts of final reports and presentations must be submitted prior to 5:00 p.m. on 4/19.

**No Class: Monday, 4/15**
No class scheduled – instructor will be available for individual team meetings by appointment.

**Session #21: Monday, 4/22**
Discussion of instructor feedback on revised draft reports.

**Session #22: Monday, 4/29**
For our last class, we will focus on reflecting and celebrating our year together.

• **Assignment:**
  - Final reports and presentations must be submitted prior to 8:25 p.m. on May 6.

**Capstone Expo: Tuesday, 5/14**
*(Special Time and Location: 5:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m., Rosenthal Pavilion at Kimmel Center)*
This special session will include your team staffing a station in the Rosenthal Pavilion at the Kimmel Center. Typically, groups will include poster boards that describe aspects of their project, as well as any other props or laptop-powered displays and demos.

**IX. CHANGES TO SYLLABUS**

The schedule in this syllabus should be a fairly accurate overall roadmap to your year ahead. However, I may still elect to change aspects of the syllabus and its contents as the year goes on. My ultimate hope is for this course to be a meaningful and rewarding conclusion to your time at NYU Wagner, and, in the event that we identify changes to our plans that would result in a more educational overall experience, I will happily implement them.

As one example, if we find that we are collectively lacking in education on a given topic, then I may change the theme and content of a given session, use alternative teaching materials and/or invite an appropriate guest speaker. In this respect, I encourage all of you to take ownership in conveying such opportunities for improvement to me and identifying “wish list” guest speakers in order to help maximize the quality and nature of our capstone experience.

**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 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 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.