



NYU

**ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

Capstone: CAP-GP 3401.008

Fall 2021 – Spring 2022

Instructor Information

- Erin M. Connell
- econnell@nyu.edu
- Office hours by appointment

Course Information

- Class Meeting Times: Mondays, 6:45 pm - 8:25 pm ET
- Via Zoom

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

Course Learning Objective	Corresponding Assignment
Understand the policy and/or management context for their project	Interim and final products
Be familiar with relevant specialized vocabularies	Interim and final products
Draw on critical research related to their content area	Interim and final products
Frame and refine the problem presented by the client	Signed contract with client
Develop a contract with the client including scope, timeline and deliverables	Signed contract with client
Develop an internal project workplan	Team workplan
Meet deadlines and monitor their progress against the contract and workplan	Signed contract and team workplan
Negotiate a contract with their client	Signed contract with client
Advocate points of view and negotiate differences of opinion	Self and team peer evaluations
Appreciate and learn from cultural and other differences	Self and team peer evaluations
Identify and synthesize existing research relevant to the project	Interim and final products
Identify and implement appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative data gathering methods	Interim and final products
Identify and implement appropriate data analysis procedures	Interim and final products
Determine findings	Interim and final products

Develop useful recommendations and/or tools and resources based on findings	Interim and final products
Synthesize and summarize large amounts of data and information	Interim and final products
Prepare clear and well-argued written deliverables tailored to the client's needs	Interim and final products

Course Requirements

An array of potential projects has been identified for our section. You will see the applications and, in most cases, will be able to interact with prospective clients via Zoom, before marking your preferences. I will take your preferences into account along with the needs of the project, students' previous coursework, work and life experience, student schedules, team size, and the balance of skills among the team. Ultimately, it's my job to create teams that can do the work for the client. 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 project work;
- participation in meetings with clients;
- participation in preparation and presentation of findings.

Since Capstone is on-line this year, we presume client and team meetings will be as well. Travel for fieldwork is very unlikely. If it turns out to be possible in January or the spring, the school will provide 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 on a team to travel.

Capstone Expenses:

Each capstone team is entitled to reimbursement of up to \$500 of Capstone related expenses, such as photocopying, phone calls, supplies, etc. None of these funds can be spent hiring others to do work that you are expected to do, e.g., writers, editors, graphic designers, etc. The forms and procedures needed to claim reimbursement for these expenses and a detailed explanation of eligible expenses are found in the Capstone Student Guide, available on the NYU Classes website.

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. 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. If the client's evaluation of your work is available, I will also take that into account.

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. **60% is based on work products** identified in the milestones as well as any interim deliverables to the client or assigned by the faculty member. **40% is based on evidence of the individual student's learning** during the course through participation in the team's work and class activities, his/her ability to act on peer and faculty feedback; individual and team preparation for and performance at client meetings; and end-of-semester faculty, peer and self-evaluations.

Note: Late Submission Policy

1. Extensions on assignments will be granted only in case of emergency or special circumstances. This policy is adopted out of respect to those who abide by deadlines despite equally demanding schedules. Late submissions without extensions will be penalized 15% per 24-hour period.
2. Assignments are due prior by 11:59 pm ET on the date indicated on NYU classes, unless otherwise indicated.

Attendance Policy

Students will be expected to be present and engaged during class, unless they notify the instructor in advance. Students are asked to not have more than two absences per semester.

Required Readings and Other Resources

The readings and resources required for this course include:

- **Block, Peter. 2011. *Flawless Consulting*, 3rd edition. Pfeiffer.** However, this is not required. *Flawless Consulting* is also available [online](#) (and downloadable) through NYU's Bobst Library.
- Other readings as assigned. Course readings will be available on the NYU Classes website or linked directly in the syllabus for this course.

Course Milestones

The course has a series of milestones – both activities and products -- that guide and track your work over the course of the year. I've suggested time frames in parentheses, though actual timing may vary depending on the specific situation of each team and client.

These milestones include:

- Potential client presentations (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);
- Preliminary client-team contract or work agreement (October);
- Negotiations with client to finalize contract (October/November);
- Final, signed client-team contract and detailed team workplan (October/November);
- Team charter (October/November)
- End-of-first semester self, team/peer, and course evaluations; discussion of team process and progress (December);
- January term: Continue project work (January)
- 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 (April/May);
- End-of-course self, team /peer, client and course evaluations (April/May);
- Presentation for Capstone Expo (May).

Class Schedule Overview

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 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 & DATE	TOPIC(S)	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
Phase 1: CREATING TEAMS Class 1 9/13/21	Introductions Overview of Syllabus & Capstone Student Guide Client presentations (4 clients)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Watch video: What is Capstone? ● Review syllabus and Student Capstone Guide ● Review capstone proposals and come to class prepared with questions for each client ● Due 9/17: Student Info and Preference Form. ● Attach resume, writing sample and Wagner transcript. Make this one document. Post on NYU Classes. Teams will be posted by 9/21, before class

<p>Phase 2: TEAM LAUNCH AND PLANNING</p> <p>Class 2</p> <p>9/20/21</p>	<p>Introduction to consulting</p> <p>Preparation for entry meeting with client</p>	<p>Individual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Flawless Consulting, chapters 19, 1, 2, 3 (in this order) • Watch: Capstone consulting videos: called “Introduction to Capstone,” “What Consulting Is and Isn’t,” and “Technical and Interpersonal Skills in Consulting” (under “Course Intro” resource tab on NYU Classes) • Read "How Consultants Project Expertise and Learn at the Same Time" (https://hbr.org/2018/07/how-consultants-project-expertise-and-learn-at-the-same-time) • Read "Strategy Consulting Needs To Change And This Is How" (https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeroenkraaijenbrink/2020/02/13/strategy-consulting-needs-to-change-and-this-is-how/#14f4eaab8675) <p>Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange contact information • Schedule one get-together purely about getting to know each other. See handout for sample questions and topics (or feel free to ignore). • Send out first client email by 9/24/21. (Send draft to instructor before sending to client.) • Schedule initial client meeting within the next 2 weeks. I must be present and will provide my availability.
<p>Class 3</p> <p>9/27/21</p>	<p>Team dynamics 1: Leadership styles</p>	<p>Individual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eisenhardt, Kahwajy & Bourgeois. 1997. "How management teams can have a good fight." Harvard Business Review. July-August. (https://www.womeninanesesthesiology.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/HBR-how-management-teams-can-have-a-good-fight.pdf) • Read and watch "Understanding the Phases of Team Formation" (https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_86.htm) • Read "Using the Stages of Team Development" (https://hr.mit.edu/learning-topics/teams/articles/stages-development) <p>Team</p> <p>In preparation of your client meeting, please share with instructor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An agenda • A set of questions for the client • Suggestions for project scope • Be prepared to report on your background research on your client (I don't need to see anything written)

<p>Class 4</p> <p>10/4/21</p>	<p>NO CLASS</p>	
<p>Class 5</p> <p>10/12/21 (TUESDAY)</p>	<p>Team Dynamics 2: Creating team cultures that honor everyone's backgrounds and workstyles</p> <p>Discussion of team charter assignment</p> <p>Contracting and project management 1</p> <p>Hear from previous Capstone students</p>	<p>Individuals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DiStefano, J.J. & Maznevski, M.L. 2000. "Creating value with diverse teams in global management." Organizational Dynamics 29 (1). • Read "Why Diverse Teams Are Smarter" (https://hbr.org/2016/11/why-diverse-teams-are-smarter) • Read "Three Reasons Why Diverse Teams Outperform Homogenous Teams" (https://medium.com/@BeThread/three-reasons-to-fight-assimilation-and-foster-genuine-diversity-in-the-workplace-56175a89d785) • Review Sample Contracts under "Client Contracts" resource tab on NYU Classes. • Reading: Flawless Consulting, Chapters 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9. • View: Consulting videos "The Project Management Triangle," "Client Expectations Management," "Risk Management," and "Client Meeting Management" (under "Course Intro" resource tab on NYU Classes) • Read Ethics Memo for students <p>Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft contract (if have conducted client entry meeting) • Be prepared to report on client entry meeting
<p>Class 6</p> <p>10/18/21</p>	<p>Contracting and project management 2</p>	<p>Individual:</p> <p>View Project Management tutorials (will be posted on NYU Classes). You can choose between these options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project Management Foundations (about 3 hours) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ https://www.linkedin.com/learning/project-management-foundations-2016/welcome?u=2131553 ○ Project Management Simplified (about 1.5 hours) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ https://www.linkedin.com/learning/project-management-simplified/outlining-the-twelve-steps?u=2131553 ○ Read "Reflection-Advice Letters" from previous Capstone students <p>Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft contract (if have conducted client entry meeting) • Draft team charter • Be prepared to report on client entry meeting

<p>Phase 3: RESEARCH SKILLS AND PROJECT WORK</p> <p>Class 7</p> <p>10/25/21</p>	<p>Literature reviews</p>	<p>Individual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Wagner Capstone Library Guide • Experiment with using Bobst Library databases to identify scholarly articles regarding your topic. Be ready to show results in class in class.
<p>Class 8</p> <p>11/1/21</p>	<p>Surveys</p>	<p>Individual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review examples of literature reviews and be prepared to discuss strengths and weaknesses • Read "The Dawn of the Evidence-Based Budget" (https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/05/30/worth-y-of-government-funding-prove-it/) <p>Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final contract due (depending on team) • Draft workplan • Final team charter due
<p>Class 9</p> <p>11/8/21</p>	<p>Interviews and focus groups</p> <p>Prepare for self and team peer evaluations</p>	<p>Individual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flawless Consulting, Ch 10 and 13 • Read "Feedback – The Fear and The Need" (https://medium.com/@_slimmer_/feedback-the-fear-and-the-need-af37ae02d0cf) <p>Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final contract due (depending on team)
<p>Phase 4: PROJECT WORK AND FEEDBACK</p> <p>Class 10</p> <p>11/15/21</p>	<p>Team reports</p> <p>Team check-ins</p>	<p>Individual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self and team peer evaluations due <p>Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared to give update to classmates • Final workplan due
<p>Class 11</p> <p>11/22/21</p>	<p>NO CLASS</p>	
<p>Class 12</p> <p>11/29/21</p>	<p>Team meetings to discuss evaluations</p>	<p>Individual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and reflect on evaluations

Class 13 12/6/21	Team meetings to discuss evaluations	Individual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read and reflect on evaluations
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January Term:

While classes don't meet, this is generally an important time for group work. Students and faculty are expected to be available and working during this time (except for the holiday week between Christmas and New Years Day).

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**.

DATE	TOPIC(S)	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
Phase 5: PROJECT WORK Class 1 1/24/22	Team updates Discuss spring schedule Discuss data analysis and considering recommendations in 2022	Individual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flawless Consulting, Ch 14 Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be prepared to give team update Revised work plan and team charter due (using track changes) – via email by class time
Class 2 1/31/22	Reexploring diversity, equity and inclusion in client work Discuss formatting final reports & outlines	Individual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional readings (found on "Resources – Class Readings" tab of Classes)
Class 3 2/7/22	NO CLASS	
Class 4 2/14/22	Discuss outlines Team updates	Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline of Final Report due 2/16 – via Classes by midnight Schedule final presentation for client (with instructor) (to be held between 4/18-4/29)

Phase 6: PROJECT WORK AND REPORT WRITING Class 5 2/21/22	NO CLASS	
Class 6 2/28/21	NO CLASS	Team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First draft final report due – via email by midnight 3/2
Class 7 3/7/22	Team updates Discuss first drafts Discuss client presentation & Capstone Expo	Individual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flawless Consulting, Ch 15 Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation from each team on key findings from your work and draft recommendations. • Include your “elevator pitch” on most important findings and what they mean to your project.
Class 8 3/14/22	NO CLASS	
Phase 7: WRITING AND PRESENTING Class 8 3/21/22	Rehearsals of client presentations	Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft PowerPoint presentation – via email by class time • Second draft of final report due – via email by class time
Class 9 3/28/22	NO CLASS	
Class 10 4/4/22	NO CLASS	
Class 11 4/11/22	Rehearsals of client presentations Prepare for Capstone Expo	Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised PowerPoint presentation – via Classes by class time
Class 12 4/18/22	NO CLASS	Individual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self and team peer evaluations due Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third & final draft of final report – via Classes by midnight

Class 13 4/25/22	NO CLASS	
Phase 8: CONCLUSION! EVALUATION, REFLECTION, CELEBRATION Class 14 5/2/22	Self and peer evaluations	Individual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and reflect on evaluations
Class 15 5/9/22	Reflect and celebrate!	Team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teams should send final version of final report to instructor and Wagner Capstone alias (wagner.capstone@nyu.edu)
TBD	CAPSTONE EXPO	Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final presentation due

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.