# **NYU Wagner logo**

# **CAPSTONE: CAP-GP 3301.001**

# **Fall 2024 – Spring 2025**

Rev 8/20/24

## Instructor Information

* Mo Coffey
* mcoffey@nyu.edu
* Office Hours by appointment

## Course Information

* Class Meeting Times: Mondays, 6:45 pm - 8:25 pm
* Classroom: TBD – check Albert the day before classes begin (we may occasionally meet via Zoom, especially in the winter; this will be discussed in class and shared in Brightspace announcements)

## 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 Learning Objectives**

### 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;

### 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.

#### 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.

#### 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.

#### 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.

### 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.

### 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 |
| 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 |
| Prepare clear and well-argued verbal presentations tailored to the client’s needs | Interim and final presentations |

## Course Requirements

Once you are familiar with the projects, you will fill out a form which gives me your project rankings and other information. 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. **You should expect to work approximately 8-10 hours a week, including class time, team meetings and project work**. Course requirements include:

* enrollment in both semesters;
* **attendance and participation in all class activities and team meetings**;
* completion of assignments on time;
* participation in project work;
* participation in meetings with clients;
* **equitable** participation (contribute your full share) in all team activities: team meetings; meetings with the client and with the faculty advisor; planning and executing background research and any fieldwork; preparing deliverables and presenting your findings.

Though Capstone is in-person this year, your team and client meetings do not have to be. Teams can work this out with me and their client. International travel will not permitted for SI3 students this year due to guidance from NYU.

**Capstone Expenses:**

Each capstone team is entitled to reimbursement of up to $500 of Capstone related expenses, such as photocopying, supplies, etc. None of these funds can be spent hiring others to do work that you are expected to do, like 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 Brightspace course website.

### **Evaluation and Grading**

Students will receive 1.5 credits for the fall semester and 1.5 for the spring semester. You will be graded at the end of each semester. The grade at the end of the first semester will reflect your work, participation and learning to date. I will assign final grades at the end of the second semester. Your final grade will override your fall grade (that is, your fall grade will be changed to reflect your final grade.)

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. **50%** **is based on work products** identified in the milestones as well as any interim deliverables to the client or assigned by the faculty member. **50%** **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.

**Mo’s note on grading:** You start with an A in this class. I will support your class participation and team engagement as best I can so that you keep this A through the end of the second semester. There are no secrets to grading here; just show me that you are trying, learning, and growing. **Show up for yourself and your team** and your final capstone grade will reflect your effort. If talking in class makes you uncomfortable for any reason, please reach out to me privately before the beginning of the semester so we can work together to allow you to meet the class objectives while also creating a supportive learning environment for you.

Please do not miss class unless it is a true emergency or you have not been cleared to entered the building by the COVID-19 team (if this happens please email me as soon as possible so we can devise the best workaround for you). We have a limited number of in-person classes and there are no notes that I can email you if you miss class activities that will replicate the meaningful discussions we will have.

I promise there are no arbitrary assignments or deadlines in this class, everything has been scaffolded to give you the best possible learning experience. If something comes up that may cause you to miss a deadline, please communicate with me as soon as possible before the deadline to devise an alternate plan (communicating before missing something is always better than after missing it).

Please do the readings and assignments for class. You will be unable to participate without having done them all.

Your mental and physical well-being are important to me. Inquisition and temporary discomfort can be an important part of learning and growing, however if anything in this class jeopardizes your health and well-being, please reach out to me immediately so we can find a way to make this work for you.

**Note on written submissions:** All written assignments for class, even if internal and for your and my eyes only, should be written thoughtfully. They should use clear, concise language – and please, take the time to proofread them. It shows that you have put effort into your work. After all, you are writing about and for yourself. All words and content should be your own. The use of AI for generating any written work is strictly prohibited. If you are bringing in outside sources, they must all be properly cited with all sources’ references noted and quoted as applicable.

**Required Readings and Other Resources**

Course readings will be available on the Brightspace website 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 reports (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 (late September, very early October);
* Preliminary client-team contract or work agreement (early October);
* Negotiations with client to finalize contract (October);
* Final, signed client-team contract and detailed team workplan (by second week of October);
* Team charter (October)
* 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);
* Second draft of final project report to faculty (February/early March);
* Rehearsal of client presentation before class/faculty for feedback before presentation to client (early March);
* Final report and presentation to client (early to mid-March);
* End-of-second semester reflection and celebration (mid-March); and
* End-of-course self, team /peer, client and course evaluations (mid-March).

## 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.

**Note that all interim and final deliverables must come to me first before they go to the client. We may go through several rounds of revision** before I feel the products are ready to be shared with the client.

Specific requirements for each class will be posted on Brightspace and emailed to you with enough lead time to prepare. **Instructions in email or Brightspace take precedence over what is written here**.

## Fall Semester

Everyone must read all the client proposals available in Brightspace before the first class.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **PHASE and DATE** | **TOPIC(S)** | **ASSIGNMENTS DUE FOR CLASS  (unless date otherwise specified)** |
| **Phase 1: CREATING TEAMS**  Class 1  9/9/24 | Introductions  Overview of Syllabus & Capstone Student Guide  Potential project discussions | **Individual**   * Read: Syllabus and Student Capstone Guide * Read: Capstone proposals; come to class prepared with questions   **Team**   * **Due 9/11 by 12pm \*form available after the first class\***: Student Preference Form. Have your resume updated and ready to send to a client. Teams will be posted by 9/13. |
| **Phase 2: TEAM LAUNCH AND PLANNING**Class 2 9/16/24 | Introduction to consulting;  Preparation for entry meeting with client  Discussion: The Vulnerability Loop  Discussion: Intersectionality  Team activity | **Individual**   * Read: The Mind of a Consultant by Sandeep Krishnan (in Brightspace) pp. 48-60, & 194-203 * Read: How Showing Vulnerability Helps Build a Stronger Team <https://ideas.ted.com/how-showing-vulnerability-helps-build-a-stronger-team/> * Read: What is intersectionality, and what does it have to do with me? <https://www.ywboston.org/2017/03/what-is-intersectionality-and-what-does-it-have-to-do-with-me/> * Watch: Capstone consulting videos: Intro, What Consulting Is and Isn’t and The Role of Technical and Interpersonal Skills * Optional watch: The Urgency of Intersectionality TedTalk <https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality> * Optional read if you’d like a research-oriented piece on intersectionality: Intersectional Political Consciousness: Appreciation For Intragroup Differences and Solidarity in Diverse Groups <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ronni_Greenwood/publication/227738184_Intersectional_Political_Consciousness_Appreciation_for_Intragroup_Differences_and_Solidarity_in_Diverse_Groups/links/5b8cc86e92851c1e1243f2a1/Intersectional-Political-Consciousness-Appreciation-for-Intragroup-Differences-and-Solidarity-in-Diverse-Groups.pdf> * Optional: Flawless Consulting, chapters 1, 2, 3 (optional: chapter 12) <https://mcclo.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/peter-bloch-flawless-consulting.pdf>   **Team**   * Exchange contact information * Schedule one get-together purely about getting to know each other. * **Due 9/11 by 12pm \*form available after the first class\***: Student Preference Form. Have your resume updated and ready to send to a client. Teams will be posted by 9/13. |
| Class 39/23/24 | Introduction to consulting;  Preparation for entry meeting with client  Team charters & scope questions | **Individual**   * Read: The Mind of a Consultant pp. 66-112 * Read: Examples of team charters * Read: Ethics Memo for students   **Team**   * **Send out first client email by 9/20. (Send draft to me by 9/18** before sending to client with multiple date/times options, to which I will provide my availability.) Client meeting must occur by September 30, but sooner is better. \***I must be copied on every client communication for the duration of capstone, including scheduling emails.** * Schedule initial client meeting to occur virtually no later than September 30; I must be present.   **Due 9/23 by 1pm (or earlier if your client meeting is before 9/23):** In preparation for your client meeting, please share with me via email:   * 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 on this)   **Team**   * **Due 9/30 by 1pm**: Draft team charter * Begin drafting contract (I don’t need to see this until after your client meeting) * Be prepared to report on client entry meeting |
| Class 49/30/24 | Team charters & scope questions  Person/role/system framework  Stating the Problem | **Individual**   * Read: Person-Role-System framework   <https://www.aecf.org/m/blogdoc/PersonRoleSystemFramework-2013.pdf>   * Read: Making Dumb Groups Smarter HBR <https://hbr.org/2014/12/making-dumb-groups-smarter> * Skim: Flawless Consulting, Chapter 10   <https://mcclo.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/peter-bloch-flawless-consulting.pdf>  **Team**   * **Due 10/7 by 1pm:** Draft contract with timeline outlines; revisions due promptly as required after class on 10/7; to be sent to client by 10/10 |
| Class 5  10/7/24 | Discuss scopes/timelines | **Team**   * **Due 10/10 by 1pm:** Send contract to client. As a reminder, always cc Mo on client communications |
| Class 6  10/15/24  NOTE: This is a TUESDAY, not a Monday. Monday, October 14 is fall break. Classes on Tuesday, October 15 meet on a Monday schedule. | Anti-Racism and Oppression in Organizations and Teams (with guest speaker) | **Individual**   * Read: Using an Anti-Racist Intersectional Frame at CSSP <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Antiracist-Frame-12.10.19.pdf> * Read: White Supremacy Culture in Organizations <https://coco-net.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Coco-WhiteSupCulture-ENG4.pdf> * Read: Dismantling White Supremacy in Nonprofits: A Starting Point <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/dismantling-white-supremacy-nonprofits-starting-point-skinner-roy/> * Read: Seeing and Naming Racism in Nonprofit and Public Organizations <http://www.mayenoconsulting.com/wordpress/seeing-and-naming-racism-in-nonprofit-and-public-organizations/>   **Team**   * **Due 10/15 by 1pm:** Draft detailed internal Work Plan |
| Class 710/21/24 | Review draft contracts & work plans/timelines  Reflection: The Culture Code  The Art of Feedback | **Individual**   * Read: The Culture Code, Chapter 4 * Skim: Flawless Consulting, Chapter 13 * Optional: Project Management tutorials. You can choose between these options:   + Project Management Foundations (about 3 hours) <https://www.linkedin.com/learning/project-management-foundations-2016/welcome?u=2131553>   + Project Management Simplified (about 1.5 hours) <https://www.linkedin.com/learning/project-management-simplified/outlining-the-twelve-steps?u=2131553>   **Team**   * **Due 10/21 by 1pm:** Client signed team contract, revised team charter, and revised work plan |
| **Phase 3: RESEARCH SKILLS, PROJECT WORK, AND FEEDBACK**Class 810/28/24 \*this class will be via zoom with the NYU research librarian | Librarian Activity  Literature reviews and research | **Individual**   * Read: [Wagner Capstone Library Guide](https://guides.nyu.edu/wagner/capstone) * Activity: Experiment with using Bobst Library databases to identify scholarly articles regarding your topic. Be ready to show results in class. |
| Class 911/4/24 | Equity in Data and Research Design  Continued discussion on literature reviews, landscape analysis, and workplans | **Individual**   * Read **thoroughly**: How to Embed a Racial and Ethnic Equity Perspective in Research <https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/RacialEthnicEquityPerspective_ChildTrends_October2019.pdf> * Read: Examples of literature reviews and be prepared to discuss strengths and weaknesses |
| Class 1011/11/24 | TBD |  |
| **Phase 4: PROJECT WORK AND FEEDBACK**Class 1111/18/24 | TBD | **Individual**   * Self and team peer evaluations |
| Class 1211/25/24 | NO CLASS |  |
| Class 13 12/2/24 | Writing Workshop | **TBD** |
| Class 1412/9/24 | Team Meetings; Feedback review | **Individual**   * Read and reflect on evaluations |

Students and faculty are expected to be available and working during December and January, except for the holiday week the last week of December 2024. If team members are planning to travel, this should be communicated in advance and work redistributed as needed. Ideally travel will be planned for when the team’s work plan and timeline is developed in the fall.

Teams will meet weekly with me from early January until the spring semester begins, at a day/time of the team’s choosing. **The class will meet weekly on Mondays beginning January 27 as needed during the spring semester. You must continue to be available for our class time on Monday evenings through the end of March.** Projects successfully completed by the scheduled outlined above will have a final class on March 31 to debrief the capstone experience.

Dates will be adjusted for the following deliverables given each team’s timeline and scope of work:

* + Bulleted outline of final report – Due by January 29
  + First draft of final report – Due by February 24
  + Final capstone abstract draft and photo for Wagner administration - TBD
  + Mock final presentations – Week of March 10
  + Final report and deliverables to client – Due by March 17
  + Final presentations to client – Week of March 17

## 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](https://wagner.nyu.edu/portal/students/policies/code). All Wagner students have already read and signed the [Wagner Academic Oath](https://wagner.nyu.edu/portal/students/policies/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](mailto: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](https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/university-calendar-policy-on-religious-holidays.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.

**Letter Grades**

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

| **Letter Grade** | **Points** |
| --- | --- |
| **A** | 4.0 points |
| **A-** | 3.7 points |
| **B+** | 3.3 points |
| **B** | 3.0 points |
| **B-** | 2.7 points |
| **C+** | 2.3 points |
| **C** | 2.0 points |
| **C-** | 1.7 points |
| **F** | 0.0 points |

Student grades will be assigned according to the following criteria:

**(A) Excellent**: Exceptional work for a graduate student. Work at this level is unusually thorough, well-reasoned, creative, methodologically sophisticated, and well written. Work is of exceptional, professional quality.

**(A-) Very good**: Very strong work for a graduate student. Work at this level shows signs of creativity, is thorough and well-reasoned, indicates strong understanding of appropriate methodological or analytical approaches, and meets professional standards.

**(B+) Good**: Sound work for a graduate student; well-reasoned and thorough, methodologically sound. This is the graduate student grade that indicates the student has fully accomplished the basic objectives of the course.

**(B) Adequate**: Competent work for a graduate student even though some weaknesses are evident. Demonstrates competency in the key course objectives but shows some indication that understanding of some important issues is less than complete. Methodological or analytical approaches used are adequate but student has not been thorough or has shown other weaknesses or limitations.

**(B-) Borderline**: Weak work for a graduate student; meets the minimal expectations for a graduate student in the course. Understanding of salient issues is somewhat incomplete. Methodological or analytical work performed in the course is minimally adequate. Overall performance, if consistent in graduate courses, would not suffice to sustain graduate status in “good standing.”

**(C/-/+) Deficient**: Inadequate work for a graduate student; does not meet the minimal expectations for a graduate student in the course. Work is inadequately developed or flawed by numerous errors and misunderstanding of important issues. Methodological or analytical work performed is weak and fails to demonstrate knowledge or technical competence expected of graduate students.

**(F) Fail**: Work fails to meet even minimal expectations for course credit for a graduate student. Performance has been consistently weak in methodology and understanding, with serious limits in many areas. Weaknesses or limits are pervasive.