

**CAPSTONE: CAP-GP 3401\_1\_008**

**Fall 2024 – Spring 2025**

**Instructor Information**

* Dr. Christopher R. Good
* Email: [crg9989@nyu.edu](mailto:crg9989@nyu.edu)
* Office Hours by Appointment

# Course Information

* Class Meeting Times: Mondays, 6:45 pm - 8:25 pm
* In Person: 181 Mercer Street (Paulson Center) Room 405, or via Zoom as specified

# 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

1. 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;

1. Process

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

* 1. Project Management

Students should demonstrate the ability to:

* + frame and refine the problem presented by the client;
  + develop a contract with the client including scope, timeline and deliverables;
  + develop an internal project workplan;
  + meet deadlines and monitor their progress against the contract and workplan;
  + revise contract and workplan as necessary.
  1. 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.
  1. 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.

1. 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.

1. 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

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| **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 |

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| 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 5-10 hours a week, including class time, team meetings and project work. 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.

Though Capstone classes are in-person, your team and client meetings do not have to be. Teams can work this out with each other and their client. (We do encourage the first and last meetings with the client to be in person if at all possible.)

# 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 such as interim and final deliverables as well as other assignments. 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.

# Required Readings and Other Resources

Course readings will be available on the Brightspace website for this course. The course will draw from three primary texts, which are noted below:

* Block, Peter. 2011. Flawless Consulting, 3rd edition. Pfeiffer.
* Bossidy, Lawrence & Charan, Ram. 2002. Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done. Currency.
* Runde, James. 2016. Unequaled: Tips for Building a Successful Career through Emotional Intelligence. Wiley.

# Use of Generative AI

Generative AI tools are permitted for specific uses within this course. They may be employed for tasks such as background research, ideation, and text editing or proofreading. However, the use

of AI for generating drafts of text is strictly forbidden. I will provide clarification on the appropriate use of these tools over the course of the year.

To ensure academic integrity, students must openly disclose any AI-generated material they use and provide proper attribution. This includes in-text citations, quotations, and references. You are responsible for the information you submit based on a generative AI query (for instance, that it does not violate intellectual property laws or contain misinformation or unethical content). Your use of generative AI tools must be properly documented and attributed in order to stay within university policies on academic honesty.

To indicate the use of a generative AI resource, teams should include the following statement in their assignments: "The author(s) acknowledge the utilization of [generative AI tool Name], a language model developed by [generative AI tool Provider], in the preparation of this assignment. The [generative AI tool Name] was employed in the following manner(s) within this assignment [e.g., brainstorming, grammatical correction, specific section of the assignment].

# 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 (August/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 (October);
* Negotiations with client to finalize contract (October);
* 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 (April);
* Final report and presentation to client (April/May);
* End-of-second semester reflection and celebration (April/May);
* End-of-course self, team /peer, client and course evaluations (April/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.

**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

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| **WEEK, DATE**  **and LOCATION** | **PHASE and TOPIC(S)** | **READINGS and ASSIGNMENTS** |
| Week 1  Sept. 9, 2024  In Person Class | **Phase 1: CREATING TEAMS**  Introductions  Overview of Syllabus & Capstone Student Guide | * Watch video: What is Capstone? * Review syllabus and Student Capstone Guide * Review capstone proposals and come to class prepared with questions * Read Runde Preface, pp. 35-43 * Provide one-page introductory slide * Provide draft resume |
| Week 2  Sept. 16, 2024  In Person Class | Discussion of projects | * Read capstone proposals and prepare questions for project liaison * Read Runde, pp. 3 - 11 * Due 9/20: Student Info and Preference Form. * Attach resume, writing sample and Wagner transcript. Make this one document. Post on Brightspace. Teams will be posted by 9/23, before class. |

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| Week 3  Sept. 23, 2024  In Person Class | **Phase 2: TEAM LAUNCH AND PLANNING**  Introduction to consulting.  Preparation for entry meeting with client. | **Individual**   * Read Flawless Consulting, chapters 19, 1, 2, 3 (in this order) * Read Runde, pp. 13 – 21; 142 - 145 * Watch: Capstone consulting videos: Intro, What Consulting Is and Isn’t and The Role of Technical and Interpersonal Skills   **Team**   * Schedule one get-together purely about getting to know each other. * Send out first client email by end of week. * Schedule initial client meeting within the next 2 weeks. I must be present and will provide my availability. |
| Week 4  Sept. 30, 2024  In Person Class | Team Dynamics | **Individual**   * Read Adam Grant, Give and Take, Chapter 5 * Read Runde, pp. 51 – 90   **Team**  In preparation of your client meeting, please share with me:   * 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) |
| Week 5  Oct. 7, 2025  NO CLASS READING WEEK & TEAM MEETINGS | Team Dynamics | **Individual**   * Read Runde, pp. 91 – 94 * Read: Flawless Consulting, Chapters 4, 5, 6, 8   and 9.   * View: Consulting videos: The Project Management Triangle, Client Expectations Mgmt., Risk Mgmt., Client Mtg Mgmt.   **Team**   * Conduct Initial Client Meeting |

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| Week 6  Oct. 14, 2021  NO CLASS FALL BREAK | Team Dynamics | **Individual**   * Read Ronald Heifetz, The Practice of Adaptive Leadership, Chapter 5   **Team**   * Prepare draft Contract * Prepare draft Team Charter * Prepare draft Timeline |
| Week 7  Oct. 21, 2024  In Person Class | Contracting and project management | **Individual**   * Read Bossidy & Charan, Execution, Chapters 1-2   **Team**   * Revise and finalize Contract * Revise and finalize Team Charter * Revise and finalize Timeline |
| Week 8  Oct. 28, 2024  Virtual Session | **Phase 3: RESEARCH SKILLS AND PROJECT WORK**  Research Skills & Project Work: Surveys | **Individuals**   * Read Bossidy & Charan, Execution, Chapters 3-5   **Career Development Speaker**  Jennie Huang Bennett; former CFO – City of Chicago  *Preparing for a Career in Government* |
| Week 9  Nov. 4, 2024  In Person Class | Research Skills & Project Work: Literature Reviews | **Individuals**   * Read Bossidy & Charan, Execution, Chapters 6-7 * View Project Management tutorials posted on Brightspace * Read “Reflection-Advice Letters” from previous Capstone students   **Team**   * Continued project work * Report on project progress |

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| Week 10 11/11/24  Virtual Session | Research Skills & Project Work: Focus Groups | **Individual**   * Read Bossidy & Charan, Execution, Chapters 8-9   **Team**   * Continued project work * Report on project progress   **Career Development Speaker**  Drew Harger, Director - Strategy& (PWC)  *Preparing for a Career in Management Consulting* |
| **Phase 4: PROJECT WORK AND FEEDBACK**  Week 11  Nov. 18, 2024  In Person Class | Team reports Team check-ins | **Individual**   * Read *Flawless Consulting*, Ch 10 and 13   **Team**   * Continued project work * Report on project progress |
| Week 12  Nov. 25, 2024  Virtual Session | Prepare for self and team peer evaluations | **Individual**   * Peter Drucker, Managing Oneself, Harvard Business Review * Complete CATME Survey   **Team**   * Continued project work * Report on project progress   **Career Development Speaker**  Timothy Bittel, Executive Director - JP Morgan  *Preparing for a Career in Corporate Finance* |

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| Week 13  Dec. 2, 2024  In Person Class | Team reports Team check-ins Discuss CATME Survey Results | **Individual**   * Self and team peer evaluations   **Team**   * Be prepared to give update to classmates * Final workplan |
| Week 14  Dec. 9, 2024  Virtual Session |  | **Career Development Speaker**  Jennifer Ford Reedy, President – Bush Foundation  *Preparing for a Career in Philanthropy* |

**January Term**

While classes don’t meet, this is generally an important time for group work. Students are expected to be available and working during this time (except for the holiday week between Christmas and New Year’s). If members of your team are planning to travel, just make sure to work things out among yourselves.

Over the course of January Term, I will meet one on one (virtually) with you to discuss and provide edits to your resume, as well as provide targeted feedback and introductions related to your career objectives.

# 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**.

Further, we will intensify our work on networking and career development, with a focus on engagement with a broad array of career development speakers.

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| **WEEK, DATE**  **and LOCATION** | **PHASE and TOPIC(S)** | **READINGS and ASSIGNMENTS** |
| Week 1  January 27 Virtual Session |  | **Individual**   * Flawless Consulting, ch 14   **Career Development Speaker**  Daniel Pianko, Managing Director – Achieve Partners  *Preparing for a Career in Private Equity* |
| Week 2  February 3  In Person Class |  |  |
| Week 3  February 10 Virtual Session |  | **Career Development Speaker**  Anita Jones, Managing Director - Barclays  *Preparing for a Career in Investment Banking* |
| Week 4  February 17  NO CLASS PRESIDENTS DAY | **Phase 6: PROJECT WORK AND REPORT WRITING** |  |
| Week 5  February 24  In Person Class |  | **Team**   * Report outlines due 2/20 |

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| Week 6  March 3  In Person Class |  |  |
| Week 7  March 10 Virtual Session |  | **Career Development Speaker**  Jessica Wood, Senior Director – Standard & Poor’s  *Preparing for a Career at a Ratings Agency* |
| Week 8  March 17  In Person Class |  | **Career Development Speaker**  Janine Wilcox, Treasurer – New York University  *Preparing for a Career in Nonprofit Management* |
| Week 9  March 24  NO CLASS SPRING BREAK |  |  |
| Week 10  March 31  In Person Class |  | **Individual**   * Flawless Consulting, ch 15   **Team**   * 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. |
| Week 11  April 7  Virtual Session |  | **Career Development Speaker**  Jenna Magan, Partner – Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe  *Preparing for a Career in Law or Further Study* |

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| Week 12  April 14  NO CLASS // INTENSIVE TEAM WORK |  | **Team**   * Draft PowerPoint presentation |
| Week 13  April 21  In Person Class | **Phase 7: WRITING AND PRESENTING**  Rehearsals of client presentations | **Team**   * Draft PowerPoint presentation * Second draft of final report |
| Week 14  April 28  In Person Class | Rehearsals of client presentations | **Team**   * Final Presentations to Clients * Final Reports to Professor |
| Week 15  May 5  In Person Class | **Phase 8: CONCLUSION! EVALUATION, REFLECTION, CELEBRATION** | Class will meet for a final time for a celebratory dinner. Location will be determined in April. |

# Participation Expectations

Class meetings will be conducted using the **Harkness Method**, which emphasizes collaboration and respect, with all voices carrying equal weight in the classroom. This discussion-based format allows the class to explore ideas as group, developing the courage to speak, the compassion to listen, and the empathy to understand. **To that end, during course-based discussions, laptops and phones should be respectfully stored and silenced**. Students are expected to treat class obligations as they would an obligation in a corporate setting, meaning, **prompt attendance is required and notice of absence must be provided 24 hours in advance**. Grades will be lowered commensurate with underperforming attendance.

# Letter Grades

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

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| **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:

1. **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.

1. **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.

# 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, please 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 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.