Course Summary and Objectives

Capstone is learning in action. Part of the core curriculum of the Masters program at the Wagner School, it provides students with both a critical learning experience and an opportunity to perform a public service. It also can provide students with a credential as they seek post-graduation employment. Over the course of an academic year, students work in teams to address challenges, solve problems and identify opportunities for a client organization. Ultimately, Capstone contributes not only to the students’ educations, but is a university resource for the public good.

The concept of the Capstone derives from architecture, where 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 integrating and enhancing student learning in several different arenas: a content or issue area, key process skills including project management and teamwork, and methods for gathering, analyzing and reporting data. Capstone requires students to integrate their learning in all these areas, and to do so in real time, in an unpredictable, complex real world environment. Although each student will be assigned to a team, the class will work as a learning community dedicated to the success of all the projects.

Potential projects have been identified and reviewed by the Capstone faculty. Faculty will assign students to project teams based on a number of factors including student preference and expertise as well as team size and the needs of a particular project. Teams are usually comprised of 3-5 students who bring a mix of skills and experience and have expressed an interest in the project.

Learning Objectives

Capstone integrates and enhances learning in several arenas: a content or issue area; process skills including project, client and team management; and research methods for gathering, analyzing and reporting data. The specific learning objectives are:

A. Content
   Students should:
   - be capable of positioning and evaluating their project within its broader planning context.
   - be familiar with specialized vocabularies required to perform the project successfully;
be aware of critical research related to their content area;

B. PROCESS
Overall, students should demonstrate a capacity for flexibility and resilience, as shown by adapting to changing and complex circumstances, balancing competing demands and accepting uncertainty and lack of clarity when necessary. Students are expected to demonstrate the following abilities in the specific process areas:

1. Project Management
   - frame and refine the problem presented by the client;
   - develop a work scope with the client for the project;
   - develop a project work plan with timelines and deliverables;
   - monitor team progress against the scope and work plan;
   - revise the work plan, including deliverables, as necessary; and
   - develop well-supported and realistic recommendations.

2. Client Management
   - assess the client organization and its environment;
   - develop and sustain the team’s relationship with the client;
   - negotiate a project work plan with the client, including timelines and deliverables;
   - maintain regular and productive contact with the client;
   - solicit and integrate client feedback on progress against work plan as necessary; and
   - deliver final product to client’s satisfaction.

3. Team Management
   - understand group formation and development;
   - understand the importance of interpersonal dynamics and team norms;
   - create and periodically review their team charter;
   - develop clear role descriptions for team members;
   - manage team assignments and accountability;
   - advocate points of view and negotiate differences of opinion;
   - solicit and offer feedback; and
   - appreciate and learn from cultural differences.

C. RESEARCH
The development of research skills is an important part of the course. This research will focus on the subject matter relevant to the students’ respective projects. Past project subjects include GIS, Transportation Planning and Analysis, Environmental Planning and Analysis, Housing, Market and Financial Analysis, Site Selection, Community Development and Partnerships, and Economic and Social Impact Analysis. With respect to research skills, students should demonstrate the ability to:

- identify and carry out data collection methods appropriate for their particular project, potentially including surveys and questionnaires, individual interviews, focus groups, and access to already existing datasets and literature related to their subject areas;
- identify and implement appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative data gathering and analysis methods for their particular project;
- situate their findings in the broader related literature;
- draw conclusions based on their findings; and
- communicate their work effectively both orally and in writing.

SUMMARY OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS
The class will involve presentations from the instructors and guest speakers, class discussion and team meetings and in some cases attendance at courses or lectures outside of the normal Capstone class
schedule where appropriate and feasible. Course requirements at both the team and individual levels include the following:

- enrollment in both semesters;
- attendance and participation in class activities and team meetings;
- completion of assignments on time;
- participation in field work;
- participation in meetings with clients;
- participation in preparation and presentation of findings; and
- completion of all evaluations.

Detailed requirements and an estimated timeline are presented below.

**DETAILED COURSE MILESTONES AND REQUIREMENTS**

The course requirements include student completion of milestones (both activities and products) detailed below, with initial deadlines indicated in parentheses. Unless otherwise indicated, all written assignments should be submitted electronically to both faculty members at the email addresses on this syllabus. The milestones include:

- Participation in Wagner School Advanced Capstone Team session (alternative sessions between August 31 – September 6)
- Submission of Resume (Tuesday, September 14)
- Submission of Student Project Preferences Form (Wednesday, September 15)
- Submission of Team Charter (Friday, September 24)
- Initial meeting with client (with faculty present) to explain the process of the course, establish relationship, assess the client organization, and gain data to clarify the presenting problem or issue and the client’s initial vision of a successful project (no later than Tuesday, October 5);
- Class Presentation on client meetings (Tuesday, October 5);
- Submission of First Client Meeting Memorandum with clear statement of the problem/work required (Monday, October 11);
- Submission of Preliminary Scope Agreement; presentation to class/faculty for feedback prior to client presentation (Friday, October 15; discussion on Tuesday, October 19)
- Meeting/Conference Call with client to finalize Scope Agreement (Wednesday, October 20-October 29);
- Submission of Project Information Needs Summary Memorandum (To faculty by Friday, October 29; to client after faculty review)
- Submission of Final Scope Agreement, signed by team members and client representative, and Internal Project Work Plan (Tuesday, November 9)
- Submission of end of First Semester Self, Team/Peer, and Course Evaluations; discussion of team progress (Tuesday, November 30)
- Submission of First Semester Log (Tuesday, November 30); this log should have been prepared over the course of the term and should address work items as well as individual and team learning goals and an assessment of progress against these goals.
- Participation in Individual Evaluation Meeting (TBD; End of First Semester)
- Submission of Updated Internal Work Plan and draft Amended Scope of Work and Detailed Project Outline of Final Report (Friday, February 4)
- Oral Presentation of final project report to class/faculty, including power point presentation, for feedback before presentation to client (classes of Tuesday, March 29 and Tuesday, April 5)
- Final Presentation of Report/Findings to Client (April 10-25)
- Submission of End of Course Self, Team/Peer and Course Evaluations (April 26)
- Submission of Second Semester Log (April 26)
- End-of-year reflection; Discussion of project in planning context (Tuesday, April 26)
- Presentation at the Wagner School Capstone End Event Exhibition (Wednesday, May 10, from 5:00-6:30 pm.)
• Presentation by one selected group (from all Urban Planning Capstone sections) at the Metropolitan Chapter of APA event (early May, TBD)
• Submission of Final Capstone Report to Client and Faculty (Thursday, May 12)

CREDITS AND COURSE EVALUATION CRITERIA AND GRADING

Credits: Students will be given two credits for the fall semester and two for the spring semester of Capstone. Note that it is the custom in Capstone to report end of first semester grades as IP to reflect the “work in progress” nature of the yearlong project (students should inform the professors if this is a problem).

Grading Criteria: Students will be graded on both the products they deliver to their clients and faculty and evidence of progressive learning throughout the course, based on the Learning Objectives (see above), including an ability to incorporate and bring an urban planning perspective to the project.

• 70% of the grade is based on work products and activities identified in the milestones.
• 30% is based on evidence of the individual student’s learning and performance during the course through active participation in the team’s work (including as indicated by team-member evaluations and the ongoing work log), class activities, meetings with faculty, and his/her ability to act on peer and faculty feedback. Quality of end of semester peer and self evaluations, demonstration of progressive improvement over the course, as well as individual performance on final presentation to the capstone class and client will also be considered for this portion of the grade.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

NOTE: All readings for this course will be posted on the Capstone Blackboard site, distributed in class and/or placed on reserve at Bobst Library. Additional readings, optional or otherwise, may be assigned throughout the year.

Team Building and Project Management:
Susan Whelan, Creating Effective Teams (to be distributed on September 8)

Conflict Resolution:

Data Collection Methods:
“Scoping the Project” (to be distributed on September 22)

Presentation Skills:

Readings in Project Areas
Additional readings can be provided to teams after projects are selected. Other information, such as links to web sites, will be distributed from time to time.
CLASS SCHEDULE
FALL 2010 SEMESTER

The schedule and topics below may vary slightly based on individual project needs. The intent is to use class time in a way that enables teams to produce the highest quality projects on a timely basis and achieve the learning objectives of the course. A greater number of class-based presentations and discussions are likely early on in the course in order for Capstone faculty to provide guidance on project management and direction. The second semester schedule allows for greater time for team working sessions.

**Note:** Though class time is allotted for team meetings/work, it is anticipated that students and their teams will need to devote additional non-class time to complete the work necessary on their Capstone projects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK OF</th>
<th>CLASS DATE, TOPIC &amp; DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>REQUIRED READINGS &amp; ASSIGNMENTS DUE</th>
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| Aug 29  | **August 31 - September 6:** Advanced Capstone Team Sessions  
Students are required to attend one of the Advanced Capstone Team Sessions (students who have taken the Wagner 2-credit Team Building class are exempt). Students are responsible for confirming time and registration on the Capstone Site. The sessions are held in the Rudin Forum on the 2nd floor of Puck |  |
| Sep 5   | **September 7:** Class Overview, Client Presentations  
This class will include an overview of Capstone objectives, schedule, and requirements, and some initial client presentations. Faculty will describe the criteria for assignment of students to projects. | **Readings:**  
- Course Syllabus (on Blackboard)  
- “Mutual Expectations for Capstone,” part of Student Capstone Guide (on Blackboard) |
| Sep 12  | **September 14:** Client Presentations  
Continuation of client presentations. | **Assignments:**  
- **Individual, Due Tues 9/14:** Each student should bring 3 copies of a current resume to class  
- **Individual, Due Wed 9/15:** On Wednesday, students individually submit their Project Interest Indicator Form (available on Blackboard), indicating 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th choices for projects. Final team assignments will be communicated electronically before the September 21 class. |
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sep 19</td>
<td>September 21: Introduction to Team Dynamics &amp; Team Charters</td>
<td>• Susan Whelan, Creating Effective Teams, Chps 3 and 4 (to be distributed on Sept. 14)</td>
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|       | This class will focus on an introduction to team dynamics, establishment of team norms, and importance of team communication. For the remainder of the class time, teams will meet to organize and develop team charter, to agree on gathering initial information about the client, and to prepare for the initial client meeting. | • Samples of team charters (on Blackboard)  
• “Ethics Considerations in Capstone,” part of Student Capstone Guide (on Blackboard) | • Individual: Individuals should begin their on-going work-logs during this time period.  
• Team: Due Fri 9/24: Submit Team Charter.  
• Team: Between 9/21 and 10/5, conduct introductory meeting with client. The professor’s schedule should be consulted, and she should be invited to attend this meeting. We recommend that scheduling take place the week of the 21st, for meetings to take place the week of the 28th. |
| Sep 26 | September 28: Discussion of the Scope Agreement, Internal Work Plan, and Preparing for Initial Client Meeting. Team Meetings. | • Sample Scope Agreement and Internal Work Plan templates (on Blackboard)  
• Project management checklist (on Blackboard)  
• “Scoping the Project” (to be distributed on September 22) | |
| Oct 3  | October 5: Team Presentations on Client Meetings                      | • Fisher and Ury, Getting to Yes, Chps 1 and 2 (on reserve)                | • Team, Due Tues 10/5: Complete initial client meetings by 10/5.                           |
| Oct 10 | October 12: Team Meetings  
No formal class agenda; teams to arrange for initial client meetings and to meet during class time to develop draft work plan; faculty can be available upon request. | Assignments:  
- **Team, Due Mon 10/11:** Each team submits a two-page memo summarizing clear statement of the problem and a plan for future activities related to the project.  
- **Team, Due Fri 10/15:** Each team submits Draft Scope Agreement to faculty. |
| Oct 17 | October 19: Team Presentations of Scope Agreements, Team Meetings  
Team presentations of Scope Agreements and class feedback to teams. Remaining class time is to be used for team meetings to incorporate feedback, both faculty and class, into plan. | Assignments:  
- **Team, Due Tues 10/19:** Prepare brief in-class presentations (5 minutes) on structure and content of Scope Agreement.  
- **Team:** Between 10/20 and 10/29, meet with client to present and negotiate Scope Agreement; professor present at meeting only as needed. Scope Agreement may need to be revised after meeting in order to accommodate parties. |
| Oct 24 | October 26: Team Meetings  
No formal class agenda; teams to meet during class time; faculty can be available upon request. Guest lecturers may be scheduled. | Assignments:  
- **Team, Due Fri 10/29:** Teams submit one-page summary memorandum of project information needs to faculty for feedback. After incorporation of faculty feedback, memorandum may be given to client. |
| Oct 31 | November 2: Team Update Presentations, Research Methods, and Team Meetings  
Teams to present update of project scope and client relationship to class. Remainder of class to focus on research methods/needs, including census data, interviewing, surveys, observation, focus groups and other methods and their application to specific projects. Any remaining time for team meetings. | Assignments:  
- **Team, Due Tues 11/2:** Prepare brief in-class presentations (5 minutes) on issues both related to scope and client communication. |
| Nov 7 | November 9: Team Meetings  
No formal class agenda; teams to meet during class time; faculty can be available upon request. Guest lecturers may be scheduled. | Assignments:  
- **Team, Due Tues 11/9:** Submit Final Scope Agreement executed with client, and Internal Work Plan. |
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<tr>
<td>Nov 14</td>
<td>November 16: Team Meetings</td>
<td>No formal class agenda; teams to meet during class time; faculty can be available upon request. Guest lecturers may be scheduled.</td>
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<td>Nov 21</td>
<td>November 23: Progress and Semester Reviews and Assessments</td>
<td>Team Charters are revisited, including consideration of how well they have served the team. Strategies to manage the most common problems that arise within teams and identify any special needs that teams have are discussed.</td>
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<td>Nov 28</td>
<td>November 30: Last Class: First Semester Progress Assessment and Team Meetings</td>
<td>Faculty will meet with each team individually to review semester progress, discuss any fieldwork that may be planned and highlight any issues for second semester. Time provided for team meetings.</td>
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<td>Dec 5</td>
<td>December 7: Individual Peer Evaluation Meetings</td>
<td>No formal class agenda; class time for team meetings or individual meetings with faculty.</td>
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<td>Dec 12</td>
<td>December 14: Team Meetings</td>
<td>Legislative Day (classes run on a Thursday schedule). No formal class agenda; teams to meet during class time; faculty can be available upon request.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 19</td>
<td>December 21: Team Meetings</td>
<td>No in-class exam, and no formal class agenda; teams to meet during class time.</td>
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Assignments:
- **Individual, Due Tues 11/30:** First written self-assessment, peer review of team members, and mid-course evaluations due. Forms are available on Blackboard.
- **Individual, Due Tues 11/30:** Sign up for individual time slot to meet with professor to review peer evaluations (times are TBD, however it is anticipated that both daytime and evening meeting slots will be available).
- **Individual, Due Tues 11/30:** Submit logs for the fall semester.
The second semester will focus on progress in meeting work plan objectives and class milestones. Instructional presentations can be arranged to meet student needs. The main emphasis is on teamwork in completing the final products, and formal class meeting times will be flexible as the semester progresses. For planning purposes, please use the following schedule, which may be updated as appropriate.

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<th>CLASS DATE, TOPIC &amp; DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENTS DUE (NO REQUIRED READINGS THIS SEMESTER)</th>
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| Jan 23  | January 25: Field Work Update and Team Meetings  
Class meeting for teams to reconnect with each other and debrief about fieldwork. | Team, Due Tues 1/25: Submit revised team charter, if necessary. |
| Jan 30  | February 1: Team Process and Work Status and Team Meetings  
Instructors to meet individually with each team to review status, research questions, client issues, and content of work. Students should be actively involved in data collection and analysis. | Team, Due Fri 2/4:  
- Submit updated Internal Work Plan and draft Amended Scope of Work. Faculty will advise whether students should seek client approval of Amended Scope.  
- Submit detailed project outline of the final report and early findings for each topic in the outline to faculty advisor via email by start of class.  
- Submit copies of any interim products to faculty simultaneously with submission to clients. |
| Feb 6   | February 8: Team Meetings with Faculty for Project Feedback and Team Meetings  
Faculty will return written comments on detailed project outline on or before this date, and will meet with groups individually to discuss feedback as needed. Teams meet on their own when not meeting with faculty. | |
| Feb 13  | February 15: Team Meetings  
No formal class agenda; teams to meet during class time; faculty can be available upon request. Guest lecturers may be scheduled. | Team, Due Tues 2/15:  
- If needed, submit Amended Scope of Work, signed by client. |
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| Feb 20   | **February 22: Team Meetings**  
No formal class agenda; teams to meet during class time; faculty can be available upon request. Guest lecturers may be scheduled.                                                                                                                                                  |
|          | **February – March, TBD: Wagner School Presentation Skills Workshop**  
The Puck Building in the Rudin Forum (2nd floor conference room).                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Mar 6    | **March 8: Team Meetings**  
No formal class agenda; teams to meet during class time; faculty can be available upon request. Guest lecturers may be scheduled.                                                                                                                                                   |
| Mar 13   | **March 15: Spring Recess—No Class**                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Mar 20   | **March 22: Team Meetings**  
No formal class agenda; teams to meet during class time; faculty can be available upon request. Guest lecturers may be scheduled.                                                                                                                                                   |
| Mar 27   | **March 29: Formal Team Presentations to Capstone Class**  
Team dry-run presentations as practice for presentations to the client of the final report. Individuals not presenting will be asked to provide feedback. These are the only in-class team presentations during the spring semester and all students are expected to be in attendance. |
|           | **Team, Due Tues 3/29:** Teams to prepare and present presentations on their projects. Schedule to be announced.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Apr 3    | **April 5: Formal Team Presentations to Capstone Class (cont.)**  
Team dry-run presentations as practice for presentations to the client of the final report. Individuals not presenting will be asked to provide feedback. These are the only in-class team presentations during the spring semester and all students are expected to be in attendance. |
|           | **Team, Due Tues 4/5:** Teams to prepare and present presentations on their projects. Schedule to be announced.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Apr 10-  | **April 12 – April 19: No Formal Classes, Final Product Presentations to Clients (with faculty in attendance)**  
[sites and schedule to be determined]                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Apr 17   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Apr 25   | **April 26: End of Semester Reflection**  
Class discussion of positioning team projects in larger issue context.                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|          | **Individual, Due Tues 4/26:**  
Submit end of course self, team/peer, and course evaluations. Submit log of activities                                                                                                             |
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<td>Early May</td>
<td>Presentation by a single team at the Metropolitan Chapter of APA event for Schools of Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 1</td>
<td>May 3: Team Meetings</td>
<td>No formal class agenda; teams to meet during class time to finalize Capstone report; faculty can be available upon request.</td>
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<td>May 8</td>
<td>May 10, 5:00-6:30 pm: Wagner School Capstone End Event Exhibition</td>
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<td>Location tbd</td>
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<td>Team, Due Thur 5/12: Each team submits its final Capstone report to Capstone faculty.</td>
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