NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE

Capstone: Advanced International Projects I

Fall 2011

Course number:  CAP-GP 3226 - 001

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DATE AND TIME: Mondays, 6:45pm – 8:25pm  LOCATION: SILVER 706

Steven Schall’s and Kate Bourne’s Office Hours: We can always be available to meet with you from 6:00-6:45 Mondays (before class) at the Silver building. Just contact us to let us know that you would like us to come early. Other days and times can be arranged on request.

COURSE SUMMARY

Capstone is learning in action. Part of Wagner’s core curriculum, it provides students with both a critical learning experience and an opportunity to perform a public service. Over the course of an academic year, students work in teams to address challenges, solve problems and identify opportunities for a client organization. Students will design the approach, conduct the data collection and analysis, and present findings, both orally and in writing, to the client.

In architecture, the capstone is the crowning piece of an arch, the center stone that holds the arch together, giving it shape and strength. Wagner’s Capstone program plays a similar role, by building on students’ previous coursework and expertise, while also enhancing student learning on policy and management issues, key process skills and research skills. Capstone requires students to interweave their learning in all these areas, and to do so in real time, in an unpredictable, complex real world environment. Although divided into teams, the class will work as a learning community dedicated to the success of all the projects.
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:
- understand the policy context for their project;
- be familiar with specialized vocabularies required to perform the project successfully;
- be aware of critical research related to their content area;
- be capable of positioning and evaluating their project within its broader policy context.

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.
  1. Project Management
Students should demonstrate the ability to:
- assess the client organization and its environment;
- frame and refine the problem presented by the client;
- develop a work agreement with the client for the project;
- develop an internal project work plan with timelines and deliverables;
- monitor their progress against the work agreement and workplan;
- revise the workplan as necessary;
- develop well supported and realistic recommendations.

  2. Client Management
Students should demonstrate the ability to:
- develop and sustain their relationship with the client;
- negotiate a work agreement with timelines and deliverables;
- maintain regular and productive contact with the client;
- solicit and integrate feedback on progress against the contract and modify as necessary;
- deliver a final product to client’s satisfaction.

  3. Team Management
Students should demonstrate the ability to:
- 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;
• appreciate and learn from cultural differences.

C. RESEARCH
Students should demonstrate the ability to:
• identify appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative data gathering and analysis methods for their particular project;
• follow established sampling procedures to create appropriate samples for their particular project;
• 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;
• situate their findings in the broader related literature;
• draw conclusions based on their findings;
• effectively communicate their work both orally and in writing.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

We have identified an array of potential projects. Potential clients will present their projects to you in the three class sessions (September 12, 19 and 26). We will ask you for your preferences, but – just to be very clear – we will create the teams based not only on your preferences, but on your previous coursework, work and life experience, other expertise, and team size. Teams are usually comprised of 3-5 students.

The class will involve presentations from the instructors and guest speakers, class discussion and team meetings. Course requirements include:
  o enrollment in both semesters;
  o attendance and participation in class activities and team meetings;
  o completion of assignments on time;
  o participation in field work with the client organization;
  o participation in meetings with clients; and
  o participation in preparation and presentation of findings.

Because this course will focus on international projects, some client organizations are not US based. This will necessitate use of teleconferencing/televideo conferencing for client meetings, depending on the facilities available to the client. Some projects require international field work which will usually take place during the Winter break. Wagner supports the cost of air travel, and some clients will be able to make arrangements for free or low-cost accommodations, but other costs will have to be borne by the students.
Not all international projects require travel, and not all team members will necessarily need to travel. The individual client proposals indicate whether travel is required.

EVALUATION and GRADING

Students will be given two credits for the fall semester and two for the spring semester. At the end of the first semester, students will receive a grade of “IP” to reflect the “work in progress” nature of the year long project. We will assign final grades at the end of the second semester. 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. Each of you will receive an individual grade, that is, individual team members could receive different grades.

50% of the grade is based on work products identified in the milestones listed below, as well as any interim deliverables to the client or assigned by the faculty member. All deliverables will be judged on:

- evidence of quality of thought and mastery of content
- completeness of assignments
- professionalism and polish of all written and oral work (we urge you to have someone proofread your writing before submission, and to practice your oral presentations)

50% of the grade is based on evidence of the individual student’s learning during the course. This includes:

- attendance and active participation in class and team meetings
- ability to act on peer and faculty feedback
- individual and team preparation for and performance at client meetings
- content of end-of-semester peer and self evaluations.
- contribution to team functioning.

Wagner is one of the leading schools of public policy in the United States and as such, attracts students of high caliber of whom it has high expectations. We expect you to preserve the integrity of the Wagner brand in the quality of your work, and we aim to do the same in our requirements and our grading. The Wagner criteria for grades are as follows:

- (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.

GROUNDRULES AND EXPECTATIONS

Our expectations of students:

- On-time attendance and active participation in all class sessions.
- Thoughtful engagement with the other teams in the class including input and feedback on their work.
- If you must miss class, notify your team members and us in advance; it is your responsibility to contact your team members or other classmates (not us) to find out what you missed.
- Assignments completed and turned in by due date.
- Cellphones silenced, no texting, no emailing during class.
- Respectful treatment of fellow students, professors and clients at all times.
- All work will be your own, or properly cited. You are expected to be familiar with the Wagner Academic Code: http://wagner.nyu.edu/students/policies/
- All writing assignments will be polished and proofread before submission. We encourage you to ask another person to proofread for you as well.
- Approach this course as you would a professional assignment or position. It is your responsibility to plan, communicate and ask for assistance.
What you can expect of your professors:

- We will generally respond within two days to your emails.
- We will let you know when we are going to be less accessible due to travel, etc.
- We are available to talk about any particular issue or concern you may have – just email to set up a time.
- In case of a real emergency, you are welcome to call any time.
- If you have a documented learning disability, we will work with you to accommodate it. Please speak with us at the beginning of the course.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES
Other readings as assigned on this course’s Blackboard site.
CLASS SCHEDULE: FALL SEMESTER

All course information including this syllabus, assignments, readings, etc. are on the BlackBoard site for this course. They appear in folders under Course Documents. We will also make announcements on BlackBoard, but generally we will also email them to you. Written team assignments such as the Team Charter, Client Work Agreement and, next semester, the various drafts of your work, will be submitted into Dropbox. We have set up folders in Dropbox for each Project, and will “invite” you once the teams are selected. (We do not use BlackBoard for submitting assignments because we have found that it doesn’t accommodate multiple drafts easily.) The exception to using Dropbox is personal assignments such as your Team Preference Form and Evaluation Forms. These will be submitted to us by email to preserve confidentiality. Instructions for how to submit appear with each assignment below. We have quite a few students and teams to manage, so please also to remember to make your name, or your team’s name, as a part of every filename.

Week 1: September 12, 2011

Assignment for this week:

- Read proposals from prospective clients Amend and UNDP

Class meeting:

- Overview and introductions. Review the syllabus, clarify course structure and expectations.
- Amend and UNDP will present their projects:

Week 2: September 19, 2011

Assignment for this week:

- Read proposals from prospective clients Malaria No More, Foundation for International Medical Relief of Children (2 proposals), Seeds of Africa (all proposals on BlackBoard)
- Recommended reading: Flawless Consulting, Chapter 19 (available on BlackBoard; see page 6 of syllabus for full citation)

Class meeting:

- Continue client presentations
Week 3: September 26, 2011

Assignment for this week:

- Read proposals from prospective clients Agora, Medical Relief Alliance, Challenger
- Recommended reading: Flawless Consulting, Chapter 1 (available on BlackBoard)

Class meeting:

- Introduction of Team Charters and Client Work Agreements (see BlackBoard for instructions/samples)
- Continue client presentations

Assignment due Thursday, September 29

- Prepare ½ to 1 page memo on why you are qualified to work on your top 2 choices. Prepare your Individual learning goals. Please email these, along with your resume, to us both by Thursday, September 29. Make sure that the file name includes your name! (see BlackBoard for form)

Week 4: October 3, 2011

Assignment for this week:

- Review Team Charter and Client Work Agreement materials
- Recommended readings (available on BlackBoard):
  o Flawless Consulting, Chapter 3
  o Joseph J DiStefano and Martha L Maznevski, Creating Value with Diverse Teams in Global Management

Class meeting:
- Project Teams announced
- Class discussion of Team Charters and Client Work Agreements
- Class discussion of initial client meeting
- Meet in teams to start work on Team Charters and Work Agreements and make plans to schedule initial client meeting
Schedule and conduct initial client meeting during the period from October 5 – 21. Professor must be present at the meeting.

Week 5: October 10, 2011

Columbus Day – No class

Week 6: October 17, 2011

Assignment for this week:
- For those teams that have met with their client: 2-page memo summarizing the team’s findings from their assessment meeting, including a clear statement of the problem. Upload memo to Dropbox, bring copies for classmates, and be prepared to present briefly to class.

Class meeting:
- Brief presentations by teams that have met with their clients
- Team meeting time to develop Team Charter and Client Work Agreements

Week 7: October 24, 2011

Assignment for this week:
- Upload draft of Team Charters to Dropbox by end of Sunday, October 23
- For those teams that did not do last week: 2-page memo summarizing the team’s findings from their assessment meeting with client, including a clear statement of the problem. Upload memo to Dropbox, bring copies for classmates, and be prepared to present briefly to class.

Class meeting:
- Brief presentations by rest of teams on their client meetings
- Team meeting time – professors will discuss Team Charters with teams; rest of time to work on Client Work Agreements

Schedule second meeting with client to present and negotiate work agreement during the period from October Nov 1-10. Your professor must attend these meetings.

Week 8: October 31, 2011

Assignment for this week:
- Upload Final Team Charter to Dropbox by end of Sunday, October 30
- Upload Draft of Client Work Agreements including Workplan to Dropbox by end of Sunday, October 30
- Recommended reading: Flawless Consulting, Chapter 5 (available on BlackBoard)
Class meeting:
- Professors will discuss Client Work Agreements with each team.

**Week 9: November 7, 2011**
Assignment for this week:
- Recommended reading: *Flawless Consulting*, Chapter 11 (available on BlackBoard)

Class meeting:
- Class will attend the presentation by Anita Kaplan on *Qualitative Research Methods* on Monday, November 7 from 6:45-8:25 pm in the Rudin Family Forum at the Puck.

**Week 10: November 14, 2011**
Assignment for this week:
- Upload *Final Client Work Agreements* including Workplan to Dropbox by end of Sunday, November 13
- Review material on Ethics Considerations (available on BlackBoard)

Class meeting:
- Discussion of ethics considerations for Capstone projects
- Team meeting time

**Week 11: November 21, 2011**
Assignment for this week:
- Upload scanned *Signed Client Work Agreements* to Dropbox by end of Sunday November 20
- Prepare brief oral team updates on work and relationship with client thus far, including particular issues faced and plans to develop and sustain relationship with client going forward; research approach, etc.

Class meeting:
- Team presentations on progress to date (5-10 minutes; see above)
- Team meetings

**Week 12: November 28, 2011**
Assignment for this week:
- End-of-semester written self-assessment *(email to us)*; peer review of team members *(email to Rafael)* by Tuesday November 29. Please make sure that all file names include your name!
Feedback (anonymous) on the course will be due to us in hardcopy on Monday December 5

Class meeting:
- Team meetings

**Week 13: December 5, 2011**

Assignment for this week:
- Faculty/Course Evaluation Form (anonymous) – bring hard copies to class.

Class meeting:
- We will meet with each team individually to review progress, discuss results of peer evaluations, and highlight any issues for second semester.
- Students will be offered the opportunity to meet with us individually to discuss reviews and their performance during the Fall semester over the period from December 6 – January 27.

**Week 14: December 12, 2011**

Assignments for this week:

Class meeting:
- Team meetings