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

Capstone: Advanced International Projects I

Fall 2012

Course number: CAP-GP.3226 (001)

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DATE AND TIME: Mondays, 6:45pm – 8:25pm   LOCATION: Waverly 366

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). 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 two class sessions (September 10th and 24th). 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:
  • enrollment in both semesters;
  • attendance and participation in class activities and team meetings;
  • completion of assignments on time;
  • participation in field work with the client organization;
  • participation in meetings with clients; and
  • 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 or local transport, but other costs, which may include
food and lodging, vaccinations, visas, local transport, will have to be borne by the
students. This typically amounts to $1,000-2,000 per student. You will get additional
information about projected costs during client presentations. 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 your mid- and end-of-semester evaluations of yourself and your
  peers, as well as your peers’ evaluations of you
- contribution to team functioning.

Wagner is one of the leading schools of public policy in the United States and as such,
arrests 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. If circumstances require a late submission, you are expected (just as in a professional work setting) to notify us beforehand.

• 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 will let you know if we anticipate that a particular class session might run beyond 8:25pm.
- 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

Not required but we have found it as a useful, practical guide.

Other readings as assigned on this course’s Blackboard site.

Wagner has a designated librarian at Bobst who can work with Capstone teams on literature reviews, as well as additional data management support:

For Research and Literature Review
NYU’s Bobst Library has a Data Services Librarian for Public Administration and Government Information who is available to assist Wagner students in gathering background information on public administration, public policy, and urban planning. Contact: Samantha Guss at: samantha.guss@nyu.edu

For Data Management/Data Analysis/GIS Assistance
Students who need help with data management (reformatting files, changing files from one software package to another), data analysis (SPSS, SAS, Stata), and GIS mapping should contact or visit the new NYU Data Service Studio located on the 6th floor of the Bobst library. This ITS/Libraries service conveniently locates staff, software, statistical computing, and data collection resources to support quantitative research at NYU. Consultation is available via email (data.service@nyu.edu), telephone (212-998-3434), by appointment, or on a walk-in basis. Information on workshops and other events is available by subscribing to the ITS/FTS Statistics and GIS Group Listserv at: statistics@forums.nyu.edu. Studio hours are listed on the library's hours and access page http://www.library.nyu.edu/about/access.html]
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.

Recommended reading for Weeks 1 through 4:

- *Flawless Consulting*, Chapter 19 (available on BlackBoard; see page 6 of syllabus for full citation)
- *Flawless Consulting*, Chapter 1 (available on BlackBoard)
- *Flawless Consulting*, Chapter 3 (available on BlackBoard)
- Joseph J DiStefano and Martha L Maznevski, Creating Value with Diverse Teams in Global Management (available on BlackBoard)

**Week 1: September 10, 2012**

Assignment for this week:

- Read proposals from 3 prospective clients: Malaria No More, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and United Methodists (all proposals on Blackboard)

Class meeting:

- Overview and introductions. Review the syllabus, clarify course structure and expectations.
- Malaria No More, UNDP and United Methodists will present their projects:

**Week 2: September 17, 2012**

NO CLASS THIS WEEK
Week 3: September 24, 2012

- Read proposals from 5 prospective clients: Amend, Counterpart International, Planned Parenthood, Scholars At Risk and World Resources International (all proposals on Blackboard)

Class meeting:

- Amend, Counterpart International, Planned Parenthood, Scholars At Risk and World Resources International will present their projects

Assignment due Friday, September 28:

- 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 Friday, September 28. Make sure that the file name includes your name! (see BlackBoard for form)

Week 4: October 1, 2012

Assignment for this week:

- Read sample Team Charters and Client Work Agreements (available on BlackBoard)

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 Monday, October 8 – Friday, October 19. Professor must be present at the meeting.

Week 5: October 8, 2012

Class meeting:
• Continued discussion of and assistance with Team Charters and Client Work Agreements
• Each team meets on its own, in class, with assistance from Professors
• Ensure plans are in place to schedule initial client meeting

**Week 6: October 15, 2012**

Fall Recess (Oct 15-16) – no class

**Week 7: October 22, 2012**

**Assignment for this week:**
• All teams will have met with their clients. Each team should prepare a 2-page memo summarizing the team’s findings from their assessment meeting, including a clear statement of the problem. Upload this memo to Dropbox, bring copies for classmates, and be prepared to present briefly to class.

**Class meeting:**
• Presentations (10 minutes each) by all 6 teams
• Team meeting time, if available

*Upload draft of Team Charters to Dropbox by end of Sunday, October 28*

*Schedule second meeting with client to present and negotiate work agreement during the period from Monday, October 29th – Wed., Nov 7th. Your professor must attend these meetings.*

**Week 8: October 29, 2012**

**Assignment for this week:**
• Upload Final Team Charter to Dropbox by end of Sunday, Nov. 4th
• Upload Draft of Client Work Agreements including Workplan to Dropbox by end of Sunday, Nov. 4th
• Recommended reading: *Flawless Consulting*, Chapter 5 (available on BlackBoard)

**Class meeting:**
• Professors will discuss Client Work Agreements with each team.

**Week 9: November 5, 2012**

**Assignment for this week:**
• Recommended reading: *Flawless Consulting*, Chapter 11 (available on BlackBoard)

**Class meeting:**
• Session on Qualitative Research. Details to Follow.

Week 10: November 12, 2012
Assignment for this week:
• Upload Final Client Work Agreements including Workplan to Dropbox by end of Sunday, November 11th
• Review material on Ethics Considerations (available on BlackBoard)

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

Week 11: November 19, 2012
Assignment for this week:
• Upload scanned Signed Client Work Agreements to Dropbox by end of Sunday November 18th
• 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 26, 2012
Assignment for this week:
• End-of-sememter written self-assessment (email to us); peer review of team members by Tuesday November 27th. 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 3rd

Class meeting:
• Team meetings

Week 13: December 3, 2012
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.
• Team meetings

Week 14: December 10, 2012
Assignments for this week:

Class meeting:
• Team meetings
• Individual meetings with students to discuss reviews and their performance during the Fall semester

KEY DATES FOR THE SPRING:

Travel: typically occurs during the period from mid-December to mid-January
Classes resume: Monday, January 28th
Outline of final report due: late February
NO CLASS: Feb 18 and March 18
First draft of final report due: late March
Final Capstone report due: late April
End of Year Capstone Expo: May 14\textsuperscript{th}