New York University
Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service

International Capstone:
Advanced Projects in Public Finance, Planning and Policy

CAP GP 3226 (002) Fall 2012/Spring 2013
Monday, 6:45 p.m. Silver Room 701

Faculty & Contacts/Office Hours

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Course Overview

Capstone is a two semester course in which students learn to work in teams as consultants for a client. Clients are public or non-profit service agencies that engage in international development work. Students learn to define a problem and develop solutions for the client as part of a team. Students will design the approach, collect data and analyze it, and present the team’s findings to the professor and to the client, both orally and in writing.

Capstone draws on what students have learned in core and specialized courses at Wagner, integrating and applying lessons from these courses throughout a year-long effort. Learning will also come from periodic shared experiences in class over the course of the two semesters.

Although this is a graduate school course, our collective goal is to simulate as much as possible the professional world, including its uncertainties and the need to work closely with teammates and clients to meet the desired objectives.

Major Learning Objectives

Classroom discussion and team coaching will focus on three major areas:

1. How to design and execute a year-long project for an organization requesting assistance
   • Define and analyze a real organizational or system problem
   • Design and execute a detailed work plan for exploring appropriate alternatives
   • Collect, analyze and organize relevant data from multiple sources
   • Respond appropriately to client needs, requests, and expectations

2. How to successfully manage an external client and assorted stakeholders
   • Understand how organizations work and the prevailing institutional culture
   • Prepare and present clear, well-written, on-time interim and final reports for a client (both oral and written)
3. How to function as a member of a **client-facing consulting team**

- Manage communication between the team and the client (accepting the constraints faced by the client and the desired frequency and method of communication)
- Contribute effectively to the team’s process and progress
- Resolve internal team conflicts constructively and in timely manner

**Team Assignments**
At the end of the second class, each student will give the professors a form listing his or her preferences for client projects in descending order of priority. The form must prioritize all the clients, not just the student’s top two or three. The professors will assign students to client projects based on student preference, client preference, academic preparation, work experience, and required team size. Teams are usually comprised of three to six students who bring a mix of skills and experience and have expressed an interest in the project. While the professors will aim to place each student according to his or her preference, the need to create balanced teams means there is no guarantee that students will get their first or second choice.

**Course Expectations**
Successful students will:

1. Enroll in both semesters.
2. Attend and participate in all required class activities and team meetings.
3. Complete all assignments on time.
4. Participate with all team members in fieldwork, meetings with the client, and presentation of findings to the professor and client.
5. Attend the Capstone end event in May 2012.

**Course Deliverables**
Over the course of the Fall and Spring semesters, students must hand in six written assignments: (1) a team inception report, (2) a team charter; (3) a team work plan; (4) three mid-year evaluations—self, peer and course evaluation; (5) a final team report; and (6) four final evaluations—self, peer, client and course. Each team must complete these assignments to ensure Spring 2013 graduation. The **work plan agreed with the client will specify the date of presentation of the final report**.

**Course Format**
The class utilizes a varied and flexible set of learning methods:

- Presentations given by faculty or visiting experts as needed
- Facilitated class discussions
- Selected readings from textbooks/reference sources/journal articles
- Team meetings (during and outside of class)
- Professor/team consultations (during class; outside of class as needed)
- Experiential learning
- Self reflection and self evaluation
**Evaluation Criteria**
Grades are assigned at the end of the academic year (incomplete interim grades of “satisfactory” or unsatisfactory” are assigned at the end of the fall semester). Students are graded on:

1. All work products/submitted assignments generated by the team (70 percent of grade; **same grade given to all team members**)
   - Product and project management
     i. *Project deliverables*, including: inception report, draft work plan, individual issues paper, agreed-on progress reports, revised work plan; draft final report, revised final report.
     ii. *Timeliness* of work assignments
   - Client satisfaction, as determined by a final written evaluation done by the client of the content and presentation of oral and written reports

2. Students’ individual performance as a member of a consulting team (30 percent of grade; **can result in the adjustment of individual final grades**)
   - Evidence of learning throughout the course
   - Individual contribution to the team/class discussions and products
   - Written peer evaluations of team members
   - Written self-evaluation memo

The professors will also compare academic performance across the teams in determining the final grades for each team and team member. The Wagner School *Guidelines for Course Grades*, available on Blackboard, shows the grading standards approved by the Faculty.

**Class Format**
1. Although some teams will be following a more accelerated schedule to meet the needs of their specific clients or team preferences, the emphasis during the fall semester will generally be on *facilitation of team start-up*. The spring semester will focus more heavily on *project activities*.
2. A portion of a few classes will be used as needed for *skill-building sessions* that will help the teams produce the highest-quality projects on a timely basis.
3. Almost all class meeting periods will have time set aside for *professor/team consultations* and teams are also expected to meet professors by appointment outside of the class period as needed.
4. Students should generally *expect to meet weekly* as a team, although there may be some weeks when it is not necessary to meet or weeks where it is necessary to hold multiple meetings.
Week by Week Work Schedule & Deliverables

FALL SEMESTER 2012

Monday, Sept. 10  Professors introduce Capstone and students each introduce themselves to the class. Professors review each of the Capstone project opportunities with input from the client organizations where possible.

Monday, Sept. 17  No class.
Monday, Sept. 24  Continued review of project opportunities with the participation of client organizations where possible. . . Students submit their client preference forms no later than Tuesday, September 25th

Monday, Oct. 1  Getting started: Team assignments announced. Organizational and task diagnosis/negotiating with clients/initial contact with clients Discussion of articles on Ethics and Working in Teams (see Blackboard) and Team Charters

Monday, Oct. 8  Further work on Team Charters. Introduction to Team Inception Report.

Monday, Oct. 15  University Fall Break.

Monday, Oct. 22  DUE DATE for TEAM INCEPTION REPORT AND TEAM CHARTER

(1) TEAM INCEPTION REPORT

Deadline  October 24, 2012
Length:  5-6 pages of text; attachments as needed.
The team task definition statement/inception report is a statement which clarifies and defines the tasks to be done to develop a full work plan. It draws on the project terms of reference the client submitted to Capstone, the team’s initial discussions with clients and your diagnosis of their organization. It allocates the tasks among the team according to team member skills and competencies.

(2) TEAM CHARTER

Deadline  October 24, 2012
Length:  2-3 pages of text
A team charter is a summary of your project team’s objectives, structure and work practices. It should reflect the input and consensus of all team members and should address how you interact with each other, with your client, and with your faculty member. Making these shared agreements explicit by writing them down makes them crystal clear. It also provides a mechanism through which you can hold team members accountable. Since the agreements have been publicly acknowledged and accepted, they are binding on all team members. As an indication of this, all team members must sign the charter before you hand it in.
Monday, Oct. 29  Introduction to the preparation of the Work Plan

Monday, Nov. 5  Teams work on preparation of draft Work Plan/ lecture on quantitative methods

Monday, Nov. 12  Teams work on preparation of draft work plan.

**Monday, Nov. 19**  **DUE DATE** for DRAFT WORK PLAN

**(3) WORK PLAN**

**Deadline**  November 19, 2012 (Draft); December 12, 2012 (Final)

**Length:**  5-10 pages of text; attachments as needed.

The client and instructor must approve the work plan. It should contain the project design, the assignment of tasks to team members, and a schedule for completing the tasks. The sooner this can be accomplished, the better. The final deadline is an **outside date**; it is intended to allow time between client consultations and finalization of the research plans and for revisions before the semester ends. Failure to meet this deadline may jeopardize the team's ability to meet the final report deadlines.

Monday, Nov. 26  Continued work on draft work plan with feedback from client

Monday, Dec. 3  Teams present work plans to class (4 mins. Presentation and 8 mins Q&A

**Monday, Dec. 10**  **DUE DATE** for FINAL WORK PLAN AND APPROVAL BY FACULTY AND CLIENTS AND for MID-YEAR EVALUATIONS

**(4) MID-YEAR EVALUATION: SELF AND PEER & COURSE EVALUATION**

**Deadline**  December 10, 2012

Students download the evaluation forms from Blackboard. Students will submit peer evaluation forms and self-evaluations and course evaluations to professors.

**Monday, Dec. 17**  Additional preparation for January field trips as needed

**SEMESTER BREAK**

Saturday, December 15 to Saturday, January 19

Field trips for data collection

**SPRING SEMESTER 2013**

Monday, Jan. 28  Three teams present their field work and preliminary findings to the class (15 min. presentation & 15 min. Q&A)
Monday, Feb. 4  Three teams present their field work results and preliminary findings to the class (15 min. presentation & 15 min. Q&A)

Monday, Feb. 11  Teams work with faculty

Monday, Feb. 18  No Class (Presidents Day Holiday)

Monday, Feb. 25  Lecture on presentation skills

Monday, Mar. 4  Teams work with faculty

Monday, Mar. 11  **DUE DATE** for DRAFT OF FINAL REPORT

(5) **Final Team Report**

**Deadlines**  March 11, 2013 (Draft); April 22, 2013 (Final)

**Length**  Varies as per client needs; attachments as necessary

There are 3 steps toward the final report: (1) a report on work progress in January 2013, which can be mainly oral; (2) a first draft of the final report due no later than March 11, 2013 (to allow time for faculty and client comments); (3) the final report due on April 22, 2013. Only the final report will be formally graded. **This deadline is necessary to meet the University graduation deadlines.** Class sessions in April may be used as rehearsals for the final professional presentations when needed.

Monday, Mar. 18  No Class (Spring Break Week)

Monday, Mar. 25  Professors give feedback on draft reports

Monday, Apr. 1  Teams work with faculty

Monday, Apr. 8  Teams work with faculty

Monday, Apr. 15  Report revisions/rehearse final presentations as needed/schedule presentations to clients as required

Monday, Apr. 22  **DUE DATE** for **FINAL WRITTEN CAPSTONE REPORT**

Team final presentations to class

Monday Apr. 29  **DUE DATE** for Final Capstone reports to clients/preparation for Capstone End Event AND for all evaluations

Team final presentations to class

(6) **Final self-evaluations, peer evaluations, Client Evaluations & course evaluations**

**Deadline**  April 29, 2013

**Length:**  Download and complete forms for each of the four evaluations.
Each individual student must complete course, peer and self-evaluation forms by this date or grades cannot be assigned to your team.

Tuesday, May 14      NYU/ WAGNER SCHOOL-WIDE CAPSTONE END EVENT
5:00-6:30 p.m.