NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE
CAPSTONE: ADVANCED PROJECTS IN FINANCE
CAP-GP.3401 & CAP-GP.3402 – Section 005

Fall 2014 – Spring 2015
Mondays, 6:45 PM – 8:25 PM
SILV Room 506
Geoff Davenport
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209-881-7299 (cell)

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:

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.
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 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.
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

I have identified an array of potential projects. Potential clients will present their projects to you in the first couple of weeks in class. I will ask you for your preferences, but – just to be very clear – I will create the teams based not only on your preferences, but also on your previous coursework, work and life experience, other expertise, and team size.

The class will involve presentations from the instructor, possible 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;
• participation in meetings with clients;
• participation in preparation and presentation of findings.

Some client organizations may not be US-based. This will necessitate use of phone and/or video conferencing for client meetings, depending on the technologies available to the client. Some projects may require travel for field work which will take place during Winter break. The school will cover financial support for the airfare if such work is necessary, but will not cover the full costs of travel. It may not be required or possible for all students to travel.

GRADING

Students will receive 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” (Incomplete Pass) to reflect the “work in progress” nature of the year-long project. I will assign final grades at the end of the second semester.
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.

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.

The final grade will be weighted as follows: **60%** based on the quality of the final work product delivered to the client and any interim deliverables produced by the team; **40%** based on the individual student’s learning during the course as evidenced by participation in the team’s work and class activities, his/her ability to act on peer and faculty feedback, preparation for and performance at client meetings, and end-of-semester faculty, peer and self evaluations.

**OFFICE HOURS**

I will hold office hours after class, on Mondays, from 8:25 PM to 9:25 PM. For Mondays on which we do not meet as an individual section, office hours will be by appointment only; appointments should be requested by 5 PM Sunday.

I will make myself available by appointment for phone consultation and in-person meetings as needed.

My preferred means of communication is email (geoff.davenport@nyu.edu). Typically, I will respond to emails within one business day. If a matter is especially time-sensitive, you can email me at my personal email address (geoff.davenport@gmail.com) or call me on my cell (209-881-7299). Please don’t leave voicemail – email me if you can’t reach me on my phone. Please do not text me.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**


Additional readings will be suggested to teams when projects are selected.
COURSE MILESTONES

Students will work in teams of three to five people on a project that is expected to require the entire academic year for completion. The course is divided into the following main components:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Identification and Team Assignments</th>
<th>3 weeks</th>
<th>September 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work plan Development</td>
<td>4-5 weeks</td>
<td>October 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work plan Implementation</td>
<td>4-5 months</td>
<td>Nov. 2014 – March 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Report Drafting and Revisions</td>
<td>4-8 weeks</td>
<td>March – April 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare and Deliver Client Final Briefing</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>April 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capstone End Event</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>May 2015</td>
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Specific milestones include:

- Individual learning goals and preference/information forms (September/October);
- “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);
- Summary by team of first meeting with client and clear statement of the problem (October);
- Preliminary client-team work agreement; presentation to class/faculty for feedback prior to client presentation (October/November);
- Meeting(s) with client to negotiate work agreement (October/November);
- Final, signed client-team work agreement and detailed team workplan (November);
- Team charter (November);
- End-of-first semester self, team/peer, and course evaluations; discussion of team process and progress; refine individual learning goals (December);
- First draft of final project report to faculty (February);
- Second draft of final project report to faculty (March);
- Oral presentation of final report to class/faculty for feedback before presentation to client (March/April);
- Final report and presentation to client (April);
- End-of-second semester reflection, positioning project in larger issue context (May);
- End-of-course self, team /peer, client and course evaluations (end April/beginning of May);
- Presentation for Capstone Expo (May).
CLASS SCHEDULE

For vacations and holidays, see the university’s academic calendar for 2013-14, found at this link:

http://www.nyu.edu/registrar/calendars/university-academic-calendar.html#1148

Twice during the year we require all students to attend a Capstone skills training instead of going to class. These dates are:

1) **October 27, 2014**: Capstone Advanced Team Session at Kimmel Student Center, 10th floor. This is a team-building session.
2) **February 23, 2015**: Presentation Skills training. Location TBA.

Also, Capstone Expo will be on **Tuesday, May 12, 2015**.

The list of weeks and topics that follows is preliminary and subject to change. Students should expect to meet weekly as a class or team unless agreed in class.

FIRST SEMESTER

**Week 1 - 9/8/14**
Overview and introductions: Get to know each other a little. Review the syllabus and clarify course structure and expectations. Begin potential client presentations about their projects (tentative).

✓ **Assignments for Week 2**
- Post your résumé to NYU Classes by Thursday, 9/11/14.
- Read client proposals and supplemental information (where applicable). Prepare questions to ask the clients at the next class

**Week 2 – 9/15/14**
Continue with client presentations and misc. course logistics.

✓ **Assignments for Week 3**
- Team selection: Fill out Student Information and Preference Form and email to geoff.davenport@nyu.edu by Tuesday, 9/16/14.
- Teams will be posted on NYU Classes by 9/18/14. Team assignments:
  - Schedule one get-together that is purely about getting to know each other. See handout for sample questions and topics to address.
  - Schedule and conduct initial client meeting. **Initial client meeting should occur no later than 10/17/14.**
  - Bring in background information on your client for team and class discussion.
- Reading for class discussion:
Flawless Consulting (read in this order): Preface to the first edition (pp. xxi-xxiv), chapter 19, and then chapters 1, 2 and 3.

Week 3 – 9/22/14
You will come to class knowing your project teams. Presentation by one of last year’s teams (tentative). Overview of consulting, based on readings. Prepare for initial client meeting, both as a class and in teams. What do you need to learn from this meeting? How can you help your client give you that information?

✓ Assignments for Week 4
  □ All students: Flawless Consulting, chapters 4 and 5.
  □ 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. Be prepared to present to class.

Week 4 – 9/29/14
We will discuss ethics-related issues in Capstone, common data collection methods, and the elements of a successful client-team work agreement and an (internal) workplan. We will also hear from teams that met with client.

✓ Assignment for Week 5:
  □ 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. Be prepared to present to class.

Week 5 – 10/6/14
We will hear from teams that met with their client. If necessary, will continue discussion of work agreements and workplans. Teams will work on their client-team work agreement and internal workplan.

✓ Assignment for Week 7
  □ As first step toward developing full work agreement, teams prepare document including: statement of the problem, objective of project, information needed, boundaries of the project, final product and interim deliverables. These must be emailed to me by 10/18/14.
  □ Schedule 2nd meeting with client, to present and negotiate work agreement. Meeting should be held by 11/14/14. I must attend these meetings (I will give you my availability).

WEEK 6 – FALL RECESS – 10/13/14

Week 7 – 10/20/14
Team meetings with professor to review assignments. Teams continue to work on work agreement and workplan.
 Assignment for Week 9

☐ Draft of full client-team work agreement (adding client support and involvement, and set of tasks) and draft of internal workplan. **These must be emailed to me by 11/1/14.**

**Week 8 – Capstone Advanced Team Session at Kimmel Student Center, 10th floor – 10/27/14**

**Week 9 – 11/3/14**
Each team presents their draft work agreement as rehearsal for presentation to and negotiation with the client. Team meetings to incorporate feedback into plan.

**Week 10 – 11/10/14**
Those teams that have met with clients present the results of the meeting. Begin work on team charters: this will involve reviewing how the team has worked together so far, deciding what elements you wish to retain and then re-designing the elements you want to change.

 Assignment for Week 11:

☐ Final written work plan agreed with client. This should be signed by the client and team.


**Week 11 – 11/17/14**
Those teams that have met with clients present the results of the meeting. Discussion of team dynamics, including working in diverse teams. Begin work on team charters: this will involve reviewing how the team has worked together so far, deciding what elements you wish to retain and then re-designing the elements you want to change.

 Assignment for Week 12

☐ Team charter due

☐ Flawless Consulting, chapters 10 and 11

**Week 12 – 11/24/14**
Review of work and relationship with client thus far. Each team will present particular issues they face and their plans to develop and sustain relationship going forward. Also more information about data gathering methods; we will focus on the tools you intend to use, but could include: interviewing, surveys, observation, literature review, and focus groups.

**Week 13 – 12/1/14**
Team meetings.

 Individual Assignment for Week 14

☐ End-of-semester written self-assessment, peer review of team members and feedback for me on the course.
Week 14 – 12/8/14
I will review course feedback. Team meetings. I will meet with each team individually to review progress, discuss results of peer evaluations, and highlight any issues for second semester.