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

Capstone: Advanced Projects in International Policy & Management I
CAP-GP 3226 – 001 and CAP-GP 3226 – 005
Fall 2014

Monday 6:45- 8:25PM
Building: 25W4, Room: C-20

Aparna Dalal
Phone: 917-635-6055
E-mail: aadalal@gmail.com

Carlos Restrepo
Office: Puck Building, 3rd Floor, Office 3036
Phone: 212-992-9867
E-mail: cer202@nyu.edu
Office Hours: Thursday, 4-6 PM or by appointment.

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 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 first couple of weeks in class. Clients that are based outside New York may not be able to do this in which case the instructors will present the client proposals. We will ask you for your preferences, but 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 comprised of 3-5 students.

The class will involve presentations from the instructors, 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 skype /teleconferencing /televideo conferencing for client meetings, depending on the facilities 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.

EVALUATION and 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. We 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 we feel that is warranted. We will make this judgment based both on our assessment of students’ contribution and learning and on the assessments you give each other as part of the evaluation process at the end of the first and second semesters.

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. 60% is based on work products identified in the milestones as well as any interim deliverables to the client or assigned by the faculty member. 40% is based on evidence of the individual student’s learning during the course through participation in the team’s work and class activities, his/her ability to act on peer and faculty feedback; individual and team preparation for and performance at client meetings; and end-of-semester faculty, peer and self evaluations.
READINGS
There are no required text books for this course. We will assign some recommended reading from this book: Block, Peter. 2000. Flawless Consulting, 2nd edition. Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.

Additional readings on specific topics will be assigned and posted on NYU Classes.

COURSE MILESTONES
The course has a series of milestones – both activities and products -- that will serve as interim work products. We have suggested time frames in parentheses, though actual timing during the course of the year may vary depending on the specific situation of each team and client.

These 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 (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: FIRST SEMESTER

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.

Week 1 – September 8:
Overview and introductions. Review the syllabus and clarify course structure and expectations.

Week 2 – September 15:
Begin client presentations and misc course logistics.
- Recommended reading: 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 – September 22:
Continue client presentations.

Week 4 – September 29:
Continue client presentations and overview of consulting. Presentation by one of last year’s teams.
- Team selection assignment: Fill out Student Information and Preference Form and attach your resume. Please make this one document and post this on NYU Classes by October 1.

Week 5 – October 6:
You will come to class knowing your project teams. 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?

October 13: Fall Recess (No class)

Week 6 – October 20:
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.

➢ Assignment for Week 7:
  ○ 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 7 – October 27:
Capstone Advanced Team Session at Kimmel Student Center, 10th floor. This is a team-building session.

➢ Assignments for Week 8
  ○ 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 us by November 3.
Assignment: schedule meeting with client to present and negotiate work agreement during the period between November 3-10. We must attend these meetings as well.

Week 8 – November 3:
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 9:
- Final written work plan agreed with client. This should be signed by the client and team.

Week 9 – November 10:
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.

Assignments for Week 10
- Team charter due.
- Flawless Consulting, chapters 10 and 11

Week 10 – November 17:
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 11 – November 24:
If needed, more info on data gathering methods. Team meetings.

Individual Assignment for Week 12
- End-of-semester written self-assessment, peer review of team members and feedback for me on the course.

Week 12 – December 1:
Team meetings.

Week 13 – December 8:
Team meetings.

Week 14 – December 10: We will review course feedback. Team meetings. We will meet with each team individually to review progress, discuss results of peer evaluations, and highlight any issues for second semester.
CLASS SCHEDULE: SECOND SEMESTER

During this semester, much of the time will be set aside for teams to meet on their own or with us. The main emphasis is on time spent working with teams and final products, and we can be flexible about the need for formal class meeting times as the semester progresses. However, as needed, we will schedule problem-solving or skill-building sessions, so you must be available every Monday night during class time.

Week 1 – January 26:
Class meeting: Will discuss schedule for the spring semester; also will have cross-learning groups. Team meeting time.

Week 2 – February 2:
Team meeting time.
➢ Assignment for Week 3
   ○ Flawless Consulting, chapter 13

Week 3 – February 9:
Class meeting: Discussion of formats and language for final presentations and final reports. Also, team meeting time.
➢ Assignment for Week 4
   ○ First draft of final report

February 16 – President’s Day (No class)

Week 4 – February 23:
Presentation Skills training. Location TBA.

Week 5 – March 2:
Class meeting: Discuss first drafts of final reports. Also, team meeting time.
➢ Assignments for Week 6
   ○ Second draft of final report
   ○ Draft slides are due one week before rehearsal of final presentation

Week 6 – March 9:
Team meeting time

March 16 – Spring Break (No class)

Week 7 – March 23:
➢ Assignment for Week 9
   ○ Flawless Consulting, chapter 14

Week 8 – March 30:
Class meeting: Discuss managing the client meeting; also team meeting time.
➢ Assignment: Each team should schedule their final presentations to the clients during the period between April 6-24. We should be present (We will give you our availability).
Week 9 – April 6:
Team meeting time

Week 10 – April 13:
Class meeting: Team rehearsals of final presentations

Week 11 – April 20:
Class meeting: Team rehearsals of final presentations

Week 12 – April 27:
Class meeting: Report back on client response to final presentations and necessary changes to final report. Discuss preparation for Capstone End Event.

➢ Assignments for Week 14
  o Final Project Report
  o Final Team, Self and Client Evaluations

Week 13 – May 4:
Team meeting time

Week 14 – May 11: Take a step back, reflect on the year’s work and celebrate!

Capstone Expo – May 12