

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE
CAPSTONE: ADVANCED LAB CAP-GP 3301
Mondays, 6:45 PM – 8:25 PM
Room 388, Global Center for Academic and Spiritual Life

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Office Hours, 3070 Puck, Monday and Wednesday 3 – 4 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 either identify opportunities for a client organization or deliver a pre-defined team-generated product. Students will design the approach, conduct the data collection and analysis, and present findings, both orally and in writing, to the client or in the case of team-generated projects to the Professor and a review panel.

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. **Syllabus items unique to client-based projects are highlighted in blue.** **Syllabus items unique to team-generated projects are highlighted in red.**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

A. CONTENT

Students should demonstrate the ability to:

- understand the policy and/or management context for their project;
- be familiar with relevant specialized vocabularies;
- draw on critical research related to their content area;
- connect their project with previous coursework in their broader program and specialization.

B. PROCESS

Overall, students should demonstrate a capacity for flexibility and resilience, as shown by adapting to changing and complex circumstances, balancing competing demands, accepting uncertainty and ambiguity, and knowing when to consult with their Capstone instructor.

1. Project Management

Students should demonstrate the ability to:

- frame and refine the problem presented by the client or as defined by their team;
- **develop a contract with the client (or amongst themselves in team generated projects)** including scope, timeline and deliverables;
- develop an internal project workplan;
- meet deadlines and monitor their progress against the contract and workplan;
- revise contract and workplan as necessary.

2. Client Management (where applicable)

Students should demonstrate the ability to:

- negotiate a contract with their client;
- develop and sustain a relationship with their client;
- maintain regular and productive communication with the client;
- solicit and integrate feedback from the client on design and deliverables;
- submit deliverables on time.

3. Team Management

Students should demonstrate the ability to:

- diagnose and attend to interpersonal dynamics;
- define roles and useful division of labor;
- manage assignments and accountability;
- advocate points of view and negotiate differences of opinion;
- solicit and offer feedback;
- appreciate and learn from cultural and other differences.

C. RESEARCH

Students should demonstrate the ability to:

- identify and synthesize existing research relevant to the project
- identify and implement appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative data gathering methods;
- identify and implement appropriate data analysis procedures;
- determine findings;
- develop useful recommendations and/or tools and resources based on findings.

D. COMMUNICATION

Students should demonstrate the ability to:

- synthesize and summarize large amounts of data and information;
- prepare clear and well-argued written deliverables tailored to the client's or project's needs;
- prepare clear and well-argued verbal presentations tailored to the client's or project's needs.

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 on your previous coursework, work and life experience, other expertise, and team size. Teams are comprised of 3-5 students. Students participating in team-generated projects will also be presenting their project scope to the rest of the class to acquaint the class with the scope of all team projects.

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 or resource providers (as applicable);
- participation in preparation and presentation of findings.

Some client organizations may not be NY-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.

EVALUATION and GRADING

Students will receive 1.5 credits for the fall semester and 1.5 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. I will make this judgment based both on my 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 final work product 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 or other meetings; and end-of-semester faculty, peer and self evaluations.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Client-Based Projects: Block, Peter. 2011. *Flawless Consulting, 3rd edition*. Pfeiffer.

Team-Generated Projects: Arkebauer, James. *The McGraw-Hill Guide to Writing a High-Impact Business Plan: A Proven Blueprint for First-Time Entrepreneurs 1st Edition* and Gelobter, Michel, *Lean Startups for Social Change (to be read by Class 6)*

Other data, tools and readings will be available on the NYU Classes site for this course under Resources.

COURSE MILESTONES

The course has a series of milestones – both activities and products -- that will serve as interim work products. I've 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.

The client-based project milestones include:

- Potential client presentations (September/October);
- Team formation (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);
- Preliminary client-team contract or work agreement; presentation to class/faculty for feedback prior to giving to client (October/November);
- Negotiations with client to finalize contract (October/November);
- Final, signed client-team contract and detailed team workplan (November);
- Team charter (November);
- End-of-first semester self, team/peer, and course evaluations; discussion of team process and progress (December);
- First draft of final project report to faculty (February/March);
- Second draft of final project report to faculty (March/April);
- Rehearsal of client presentation before class/faculty for feedback before presentation to client (March/April);
- Final report and presentation to client (April);
- End-of-second semester reflection and celebration (May);
- End-of-course self, team /peer, client and course evaluations (end April/beginning of May);
- Presentation for Capstone Expo (May).

The team-generated project milestones include:

- Presentation of project scope to fellow classmates (September);
- Team role designations (September/October);
- Negotiations to finalize contract (October);
- Lean Change Canvas and Problem Identification (October)
- Preliminary work agreement; presentation to class/faculty for feedback (October/November);
- Final, signed team contract and detailed team workplan (November) including
 - Identifying the problem (research/literature review/survey/focus groups)
 - Landscape analysis
 - Market competitive analysis
 - Value proposition
 - Barriers to entry
 - Product Definition & Design
 - Strategy and Implementation Plan
 - Organizational and Operational Plan (including structure)
 - Financial Plan
 - Financing Plan
 - Risk Analysis/Mitigation
- Team charter (November);
- End-of-first semester self, team/peer, and course evaluations; discussion of team process and progress (December);
- First draft of Business Case to faculty (February/March);
- Second draft of Business Case to faculty (March/April);
- Rehearsal of Business Case presentation before class/faculty for feedback before presentation to panel (March/April);
- Final Business Case and presentation to panel (April);
- End-of-second semester reflection and celebration (May);
- End-of-course self, team /peer, and course evaluations (end April/beginning of May);
- Presentation for Capstone Expo (May).

Twice during the year we hold Capstone skills trainings during the Monday Capstone class time. These dates are:

- 1) October 16, 2017: Project Management. This will cover the basics of project management.
- 2) March 5, 2018: Presentation Skills training. This is required: All students must be present.

Also, Capstone Expo will be on Tuesday, May 8, 2018.

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. We will meet occasionally in

other locations such as the Leslie eLab. Please be on the lookout for Classes announcements regarding meeting place changes.

CLASS SCHEDULE: FIRST SEMESTER

Week 1 [September 11, 2017]:

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.

➤ *Assignments for Week 2*

- Team selection: Fill out Student Information and Preference Form and attach your resume. **Please make this one document and post this on NYU Classes by [September 18].**
- Role identification: Identify roles that your team project will need and draft descriptions of those roles **[due September 18].**

Week 2 [September 18, 2017]:

Continue with client presentations and misc course logistics.

➤ *Assignments for Week 3*

- Teams will be posted on NYU Classes by **[September 21]**. Team assignments:
 - *Schedule one get-together that is purely about getting to know each other. See handout in Classes > Assignments, if you wish, for sample questions and topics to address.*
 - *Schedule and conduct initial client meeting during the period from [September 25th – October 9th]. I must be present at the meeting (I will give you my availability).*
 - *Bring in background information on your client for team and class discussion.*
- Agree on team member assignments for each of the defined roles **[due September 25].**
- Reading:
 - *Flawless Consulting (read in this order): Preface to the third edition, chapter 19, and then chapters 1, 2 and 3.*
 - **Guide to Writing a High-Impact Business Plan: Chapters 1, 2 and 3**

Week 3 [September, 25, 2017]:

You will come to class knowing your project teams. 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?

Guest Lecturer Warner Fite <https://wagner.nyu.edu/community/faculty/warner-fite> will discuss the process of scoping client projects.

You will come to class prepared with draft questions that you would like to consider for framing surveys and/or focus groups to help further define your opportunity, problem and concept.

Guest Lecturer Cliff Frasier <https://wagner.nyu.edu/education/degrees/doctorate-public-administration/students/cliff-frasier> will discuss the process of Survey and Focus Groups design.

➤ **Assignments for Week 4**

- 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.*
- *Guide to Writing a High-Impact Business Plan: Chapter 4*

Week 4 [October 2, 2017]:

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.*
- *Draft problem identification for your team-generated project summarized in a 2-page memorandum along with a Lean Change Canvas*

Week 5 [October 16, 2017]:

Capstone Required Skills Training – Project Management (full class period)

➤ **Assignment for Week 6**

- *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 October 20, 2017.***
- *Lean Startups for Social Change should be read before Class 6*

Week 6 [October 23, 2017]:

The first half of the class will have guest lecturer Dan Porter <https://wagner.nyu.edu/community/faculty/dan-porter> discussing social technology development process and doing real-time review of team-generated project design ideas. We will then hear from teams that met with their client. If necessary, we will continue discussion of work agreements and workplans. Teams will work on their client-team work agreement and internal workplan and will meet with the professor to review progress. Teams continue to work on work agreement and workplan.

➤ **Assignment for Week 7**

- *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 October 27, 2017.***

Week 7 [October 30, 2017]:

Each team presents their draft work agreement *as rehearsal for presentation to and negotiation with the client*. Team meetings to incorporate feedback into plan.

- *Assignment: Negotiate work agreement with client. This could involve in-person meetings or could be done by email and phone. If you do set up a meeting, I must attend. (I will give you my availability).*
- *Draft work plan*

Week 8 [November 6, 2017]:

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 members.*
 - *Final written work plan agreed amongst team. This should be signed by the team members.*

Week 9 [November 13, 2017]:

Those teams that have met with clients present the results of the meeting. Discussion of team dynamics, including working in diverse teams. Continue work on team charters.

- **Assignments for Week 10**
 - *Team charter due.*
 - *Flawless Consulting, chapters 10 and 13*
 - *Guide to Writing a High Impact Business Plan: Chapters 5 and 6*

Week 10 [November 20, 2017]:

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 27, 2017]

If needed, more info on data gathering methods. Team meetings. Possible cross-team learning groups.

- **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 4, 2017]

Team meetings. I will be available as needed.

Week 13 [December 11, 2017]

Team meetings. I will be available as needed.

Week 14 [December 12, 2017]

I will review feedback to me about the course. Also, I will meet with each team individually to review progress, discuss results of peer evaluations, and highlight any issues for second

semester. I will schedule an hour with each team which means some meetings will take place outside of class time.

CLASS SCHEDULE: SECOND SEMESTER

During this semester, much of the time will be set aside for teams to meet on their own or with me. 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. Also, for planning purposes, I've noted here some potential deadlines, but these are preliminary and could change.

Week 1 [January 22, 2018]:

Class meeting: Will discuss schedule for the spring semester; I will meet with each team.

- *For this class: revise workplan and team charter and send to me.*

Week 2: [January 29, 2018]

Team meeting time.

- **Assignment for Week 3**
 - *Flawless Consulting, chapter 14*
 - *Guide to Writing a High Impact Business Plan: Chapters 7 and 8*

Week 3 [February 5, 2018]:

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*

Week 4 [February 12, 2018]:

Team meeting time.

Week 5 [February 26, 2018]:

Class meeting: Discuss first drafts of final reports. Also, team meeting time.

- **Assignments for Week 9**
 - *Second draft of final report*

Week 6 [March 5, 2018]:

Capstone Required Skills Training – Project Management (full class period)

Week 7 [March 19, 2018]:

- **Assignment for Week 8**
 - *Flawless Consulting, chapter 15*
 - *Guide to Writing a High Impact Business Plan: Chapter 9*

Week 8 [March 26, 2018]:

Class meeting: Discuss managing the client meeting; also team meeting time.

- **Assignment:** *Each team should schedule their final presentations during the period between [date range]. I should be present (I will give you my availability).*

Week 9 [April 2, 2018]:

Team meeting time

Week 10 [April 9, 2018]:

Class meeting: Team rehearsals of final presentations

Week 11 [April 16, 2018]:

Class meeting: Team rehearsals of final presentations

Week 12 [April 23, 2018]:

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**
 - *Final Project Report*
 - *Final Team, Self, and Client Evaluations*

Week 13 [April 30, 2018]:

Team meeting time

Week 14: [May 7, 2018] Take a step back and reflect on the year's work and your own learning. Celebration!

Capstone Expo [May 8, 2018]