



**NYU**

**ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

## Capstone: CAP-GP Fall 2021 Policy Capstone Section 7 Fall 2021 – Spring 2022

### **Instructor Information**

- Alexander Shermansong
- as10955@nyu.edu
- Before / after class by appointment

### **Course Information**

- Class Meeting Times: Mondays, 6:45 pm - 8:25 pm
- Via Zoom

### **Course Description**

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.

### **Course and 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.

### a. Project Management

Students should demonstrate the ability to:

- frame and refine the problem presented by the client;
- develop a contract with the client 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.

### b. Client Management

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.

### c. 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 needs;
- prepare clear and well-argued verbal presentations tailored to the client's needs.

Learning Assessment Table

<b>Course Learning Objective</b>	<b>Corresponding Assignment</b>
Understand the policy and/or management context for their project	Interim and final products
Be familiar with relevant specialized vocabularies	Interim and final products
Draw on critical research related to their content area	Interim and final products
Frame and refine the problem presented by the client	Signed contract with client
Develop a contract with the client including scope, timeline and deliverables	Signed contract with client
Develop an internal project workplan	Team workplan
Meet deadlines and monitor their progress against the contract and workplan	Signed contract and team workplan
Negotiate a contract with their client	Signed contract with client
Advocate points of view and negotiate differences of opinion	Self and team peer evaluations
Appreciate and learn from cultural and other differences	Self and team peer evaluations
Identify and synthesize existing research relevant to the project	Interim and final products

Identify and implement appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative data gathering methods	Interim and final products
Identify and implement appropriate data analysis procedures	Interim and final products
Determine findings	Interim and final products
Develop useful recommendations and/or tools and resources based on findings	Interim and final products
Synthesize and summarize large amounts of data and information	Interim and final products
Prepare clear and well-argued written deliverables tailored to the client's needs	Interim and final products
Prepare clear and well-argued verbal presentations tailored to the client's needs	Interim and final presentations

### **Course Requirements**

An array of potential projects has been identified for our section. You will see the applications and, in most cases, will be able to interact with prospective clients via Zoom, before marking your preferences. I will take your preferences into account along with the needs of the project, students' previous coursework, work and life experience, student schedules, team size, and the balance of skills among the team. Ultimately, it's my job to create teams that can do the work for the client. Teams are comprised of 3-5 students.

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 project work;
- participation in meetings with clients;
- participation in preparation and presentation of findings.

Since Capstone is on-line this year, we presume client and team meetings will be as well. Travel for fieldwork is very unlikely. If it turns out to be possible in January or the spring, the school will provide 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 on a team to travel.

### **Capstone Expenses:**

Each capstone team is entitled to reimbursement of up to \$500 of Capstone related expenses, such as photocopying, phone calls, supplies, etc. None of these funds can be spent hiring others to do work that you are expected to do, e.g., writers, editors, graphic designers, etc. The forms and procedures needed to claim reimbursement for these expenses and a detailed explanation of eligible expenses are found in the Capstone Student Guide, available on the NYU Classes website.

### **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 yearlong 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. If the client’s evaluation of your work is available, I will also take that into account.

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. 70% is based on work products identified in the milestones as well as any interim deliverables to the client or assigned by the faculty member. 30% 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.

### **Required Readings and Other Resources**

Course readings will be available on the NYU Brightspace website for this course.

In the first weeks, readings include:

- Making Dumb Groups Smarter <https://hbr.org/2014/12/making-dumb-groups-smarter>
- Seeing and Naming Racism in Nonprofit and Public Organizations <http://www.mayenoconsulting.com/wordpress/seeing-and-naming-racism-in-nonprofit-and-public-organizations/>
- Teamwork on the Fly <https://hbr.org/2012/04/teamwork-on-the-fly-2>
- 8 Ground Rules for Great Meetings <https://hbr.org/2016/06/8-ground-rules-for-great-meetings>
- The PMO Imperative <https://www.pmi.org/learning/thought-leadership/pulse/strategic-initiative-management-the-pmo-imperative>

## Course Milestones

The course has a series of milestones – both activities and products -- that guide and track your work over the course of the year. I've suggested time frames in parentheses, though actual timing may vary depending on the specific situation of each team and client.

These milestones include:

- Potential client presentations (September);
- Team formation (September);
- “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 (October);
- Negotiations with client to finalize contract (October/November);
- Final, signed client-team contract and detailed team workplan (October/November);
- Team charter (October/November)
- End-of-first semester self, team/peer, and course evaluations; discussion of team process and progress (December);
- January term: Continue project work (January)
- 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 (April/May);
- End-of-course self, team /peer, client and course evaluations (April/May);
- Presentation for Capstone Expo (May).

## Class Schedule Overview

Students should expect to meet weekly as a class or team unless agreed in class. The sequence of classes, and due dates for assignments, could change depending on your meetings with clients and the substance of your projects. Specific requirements for each class will be posted on NYU Classes and emailed to you with enough lead time to prepare.

**NYU Brightspace takes precedence over what is written here.**

- 9/13/21**  
Monday
- Syllabus & client presentations**
- Watch What is Capstone?
  - Review syllabus and Student Capstone Guide
  - Review capstone proposals and come to class prepared with questions
  - **DUE 9/17:** Student and project survey
- 9/20/21**
- Team formation**
- Watch consulting videos: Intro, What Consulting Is and Isn't and The Role of Technical and Interpersonal Skills
  - In class: Share contact info, set up group workspace, get to know each other (handout)
  - **DUE 9/24:** Draft client email
  - **DUE 10/1:** Team charter
- 9/27/27**
- Client engagement**
- Assignment: Background research on your project
  - In class: Desk research about your client and engagement
  - In class: Questions about proposal / contract; hypotheses about how to add value
  - **DUE 9/30:** Schedule client kickoff -- must include professor
  - **DUE 9/30:** Agenda for client kickoff
  - **DUE 10/8:** Draft contract
  - **DUE 10/29:** Signed contract
- 10/4/21**
- Team dynamics**
- Reading: "Teamwork on the Fly"
  - Reading: "8 Ground Rules for Great Meetings"
  - Watch consulting videos: The Project Management Triangle, Client Expectations Mgmt, Risk Mgmt, Client Mtg Mgmt.
  - In class: Leadership Compass
- 10/12/21**  
Tuesday
- Project management**
- Reading: "The PMO Imperative"
  - In class: Report on client kickoff
  - In class: Map deliverables, hypotheses, analyses, tasks
  - **DUE 10/15:** Draft work plan
  - **DUE 10/29:** Revised work plan
- 10/18/21**
- Project management**
- In class: Report on client kickoff
  - Present work plans
  - In class: Discuss work plan and risks

- 10/25/21 Literature review**
- Review Wagner Capstone Library Guide
  - Use Bobst Library databases to find scholarly articles
  - Review examples of literature reviews
  - In class: Share results of research and discuss lit review examples
  - **DUE 11/12:** Draft lit review
  - **DUE 11/29:** Client-ready lit review
- 11/1/21 Data collection**
- Discuss data requests, surveys, interviews
  - **DUE 11/5:** Detailed work plan for data collection
- 11/08/21 Analysis**
- In class: 30-second updates
  - In class: Identify potential recommendations “answers first”
- 11/15/21 Team reports**
- Present lit review in class
  - **DUE TBD:** Self and peer evaluations
- 11/22/21 NO CLASS**
- 11/29/21 Feedback**
- Discuss course and peer evaluations
- 12/6/21 Feedback**
- Discuss course and peer evaluations
- 12/13/21 Individual meetings with professor**
- January** While classes don’t meet, this is generally an important time for group work. Students and faculty are expected to be available and working during this time (except for the holiday week between Christmas and New Years).
- Spring** 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. 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**.
- 1/24/22 Team updates**
- Present progress updates
  - **DUE 1/28:** Update work plan
  - **DUE 1/28:** Review team charter



- 1/31/22**      **Looking ahead: Final reports and presentations**
- Flip through examples of final reports from prior Capstones
  - **DUE 2/11**: Ghost deck for final presentation (recommendations and analysis)
- 2/7/22**      **TEAM MEETINGS**
- 2/14/22**      **Preview: Final presentations**
- Present ghost decks to class
  - **DUE 3/14**: Review preliminary recommendations with client (must include professor)
- 2/21/22**      **NO CLASS**
- 2/28/22**      **TEAM MEETINGS**
- **DUE 3/26**: Draft final report
  - **DUE 4/9**: Final presentation ready for client
  - **DUE 4/22**: Final report ready for client
- 3/7/22**      **TEAM MEETINGS**
- 3/14/22**      **NO CLASS**
- 3/21/22**      **TEAM MEETINGS**
- 3/28/22**      **Preview: Final presentations**
- Share feedback from clients
  - Practice “elevator pitch” of project impact
  - **DUE 4/1**: Schedule final presentation to client
- 4/4/22**      **TEAM MEETINGS**
- 4/11/22**      **Presentation rehearsals**
- 4/18/21**      **Presentation rehearsals**

- 4/25/22**      **Getting the most from your Capstone**
- **DUE 4/29:** Update LinkedIn with Capstone experience (not graded)
- 5/2/22**      **Self and peer evaluations**
- 5/9/22**      **Reflect and celebrate**
- Submit final reports to [wagner.capstone@nyu.edu](mailto:wagner.capstone@nyu.edu)

### **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by Wagner's Academic Code. All Wagner students have already read and signed the Wagner Academic Oath. Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to me. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with me.

### **Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at NYU**

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) website and click on the Reasonable Accommodations and How to Register tab or call or email CSD at (212-998-4980 or [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu)) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

### **NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays**

NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays that might coincide with exams to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.