



**NYU**

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

## Urban Planning Capstone: CAP-GP 3601-002

Fall 2021 - Spring 2022

### Instructor Information

#### **Sarah Kaufman**

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### Course Information

- Class Meeting Time: Mondays, 6:45pm - 8:25pm
- Class Location: Zoom: see the links on the Zoom tab in NYU Brightspace

### 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. It also can provide students with a credential as they seek post-graduation employment. 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.

Potential projects have been identified and reviewed by the Capstone faculty. Faculty will assign students to project teams based on a number of factors, including student preference and expertise as well as team size and the needs of a particular project. Teams usually comprise 3-5 students who bring a mix of skills and experience and have expressed an interest in the project.

## **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

<b>Course Learning Objective</b>	<b>Corresponding Assignment</b>
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**

Capstone faculty have identified an array of potential projects. Potential clients will present their projects to you in the first three weeks of class. Students will be asked for project preferences; however, teams are created based not only on preferences, but also on previous coursework, work and life experience, other expertise, and team size. Teams comprise 3-5 students each.

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; and
- completion of all evaluations.

**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. Faculty will assign final grades at the end of the second semester.

**Grading Criteria:** Students will be graded on both the products they deliver to their clients and faculty and evidence of progressive learning throughout the course, based on the Learning Objectives (see above), including an ability to incorporate and bring an urban planning perspective to the project.

- 70% of the grade is based on team work products and activities identified in the milestones.
- 30% is based on evidence of the individual student’s learning and performance during the course through active participation in the team’s work (including as indicated by team-member evaluations), class activities, meetings with faculty, and the ability to act on peer and faculty feedback. Quality of end-of-semester peer and self evaluations, demonstration of progressive improvement over the course, as well as individual performance on final presentation to the capstone class and client will also be considered for this portion of the grade.

## Required Readings and Other Resources

Reading assignments vary by Capstone team; faculty advisor will distribute readings, as appropriate and relevant to project.

## Course Milestones

The course has a series of milestones—both activities and products—that will serve as interim work products. Suggested time frames are 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:

- Client applicant presentations (recorded) (September);
- Team formation (September);
- Team charter (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);
- Negotiations with client to finalize contract (October);
- Final, signed client-team contract (October);

- Detailed team workplan (October/November);
- Research (October/November)
- Existing Conditions Memo/Interim Deliverable (November/December)
- 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).

## Class Schedule Overview

The tentative fall class schedule is provided below; it will be updated regularly in a separate document. **The class meeting schedule is subject to change, as Capstone remains a fluid learning experience.** Students should expect to meet weekly as a class or team unless otherwise agreed in class.

The sequence of classes, and due dates for assignments, could change depending in part on your meetings with clients and the substance of your projects. Specific requirements for each class will be posted on NYU Brightspace and emailed to you with enough lead time to prepare. **NYU Brightspace takes precedence over what is written here.**

Please take note of the [NYU Academic Calendar for 2021-22](#)

# URBAN PLANNING CAPSTONE CLASS SCHEDULE

## Fall 2021 Semester

**Monday 6:45-8:25 p.m. as of 11/1/2021**

The schedule and topics below may vary based on individual project needs. The intent is to use class time in a way that enables teams to produce the highest quality projects on a timely basis and achieve the learning objectives of the course. A greater number of class-based presentations and discussions are likely early on in the course in order for Capstone faculty to provide guidance on project management and direction. The second semester schedule (to be distributed at a later date) allows for greater time for team working sessions.

**Note:** Though some class time is allotted for team meetings/work, it is anticipated that students and their teams will need to devote additional non-class time on a weekly basis to complete the work necessary on their Capstone projects.

Class Date (Mondays)	Class Topic and Description	Assignments Due  (all assignments are due to faculty advisor in advance of class unless otherwise noted)
Class 1 9/13/21	Introduction to Urban Planning Capstone 2021-22  Discussion on Client Applicant Presentations	Watch "What is Capstone?" video: <a href="https://wagner.nyu.edu/portal/students/academics/capstone">https://wagner.nyu.edu/portal/students/academics/capstone</a>  Watch NYU Brightspace Overview video: <a href="https://brightspace.nyu.edu/d2l/le/news/6606/27815/view">https://brightspace.nyu.edu/d2l/le/news/6606/27815/view</a>  Review Capstone Syllabus and Student Guide  <b>Due Wed. 9/15: Submit Project Interest Indicator Form</b> indicating 1st, 2nd, and 3rd project choices. Team assignments will be distributed before the 9/20 class
Class 2 9/20/21	Preparation for kick-off meeting with client; Team Dynamics	<b>Due Fri 9/24: Submit draft client kick-off meeting agenda</b> to faculty advisor.

<b>Class Date (Mondays)</b>	<b>Class Topic and Description</b>	<b>Assignments Due</b> (all assignments are due to faculty advisor in advance of class unless otherwise noted)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team formation begins. Class will focus on an introduction to team dynamics, establishment of team norms, and importance of team communication.</li> <li>• Teams, during class: Establish weekly meeting time; set up shared Google Drive folder; draft introductory email to client scheduling client kick-off meeting. <i>Note: The faculty advisor will attend the client kick-off meeting—please consult their schedule in setting up this meeting, taking into account the time it takes to set up a meeting and coordinate schedules in planning to meet deadlines.</i></li> </ul>	<p>Watch Capstone consulting videos: 1) Intro, 2) What Consulting Is and Isn't, 3) The Role of Technical and Interpersonal Skills, 4) The Project Management Triangle, 5) Client Expectations 6) Risk Management, 7) Client Meeting Management</p> <p>Review sample Team Charters</p>
Class 3 9/27/21	<p><b>Team Dynamics, cont.; Team Charters; Knowing the Client</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of importance of researching the client and understanding client internal dynamics. Prepare for the client kick-off meeting with an agenda and display of project understanding.</li> <li>• Teams will meet to organize and revise team charter, agree on gathering initial information about the client, and prepare for the client kick-off meeting.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Between Tues 9/28 &amp; Fri 10/8: Conduct kick-off meeting with client.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulate meeting objectives</li> <li>• Finalize meeting agenda</li> <li>• Post-meeting: summarize meeting with memo to faculty advisor and post to Brightspace</li> </ul> <p><b>Due Mon 10/4: Submit draft Team Charter to faculty advisor.</b> Be prepared to talk about proposed team member roles in class.</p>



<p>Class 4 10/04/21</p>	<p><b>Scope Agreement (Contract), Schedule, and Internal Workplan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class will focus on elements of a successful client engagement, including scope agreement, research methods/approach* and project management including</li> </ul>	<p><b>Submit revised Team Charter</b> based on classmate and advisor feedback, and experience working together thus far.</p> <p>Review sample Scope Agreements</p>
<p><b>Class Date (Mondays)</b></p>	<p><b>Class Topic and Description</b></p>	<p><b>Assignments Due</b> (all assignments are due to faculty advisor in advance of class unless otherwise noted)</p>
	<p>internal project timeline/schedule and deliverables.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Once completed and agreed upon with the client, the Scope Agreement will constitute the “contract” for the Capstone project.</li> </ul> <p>*Depending on the project, methods may include using census data, interviewing, surveys, observation, focus groups, and other methods and their application to specific projects.</p>	
<p>Class 5 Tuesday, 10/12/21 (Legislative Monday)</p>	<p><b>Team Building</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-class exercise</li> <li>• Discussion of how remote teams differ from in-person teams</li> </ul>	<p><b>Submit Draft Scope Agreement.</b> Draft Scope Agreement should include a clear statement of the problem, a data needs and methods section, and a section on key milestones/deliverables.</p> <p>Post kick-off meeting, communicate with client to present and negotiate Scope Agreement. Scope may need to be revised after client feedback.</p>

Class 6 10/18/21	<b>Project Management and Workplan, cont.; Introduction to Existing Conditions Memo / Interim Deliverable</b>  Teams, during class: Begin drafting Workplan	<b>Submit final Scope Agreement signed by client and countersigned by team members.</b> Post to Brightspace when finalized.  Review sample workplans
Class 7 10/25/21	<b>Overview: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Urban Planning</b>  <b>Panel Discussion: “The Science &amp; Art of Urban Planning Consulting”</b>	<b>Submit revised Workplan</b>  Begin research
Class 8 11/01/21	<b>No Formal Class. Teams to meet with faculty, as necessary.</b>	Research, cont.
<b>Class Date (Mondays)</b>	<b>Class Topic and Description</b>	<b>Assignments Due</b> (all assignments are due to faculty advisor in advance of class unless otherwise noted)
Class 9 11/08/21	<b>Team Presentations on Research Methods and Challenges (1 of 2)</b> Teams to present outline of information needs and research methods being used in fulfilling Scope Agreement with client, as well as any identified challenges with methods/approach to date.	Begin drafting Existing Conditions Memo/ Interim Deliverable
Class 10 11/15/21	<b>Team Presentations on Research Methods and Challenges (1 of 2)</b> Teams to present outline of information needs and research methods being used in fulfilling Scope Agreement with client, as well as any identified challenges with methods/approach to date.	
Class 11 11/22/21	<b>NO CLASS</b>	<b>Due Wed 11/24:</b> Submit draft Existing Conditions Memo/Interim Deliverable

Class 12 11/29/21	<b>Guest Lecturer: Emily Austin on writing a successful Capstone Report Outline</b>	Ongoing: revise Existing Conditions Memo/Interim Deliverable based on faculty advisor feedback
Class 13 12/6/21	Self and team peer evaluations  Team meetings with faculty advisor	
Class 14 12/13/21	<b>Last Class: First Semester Progress Assessment and Team Meetings</b> Faculty will meet with each team individually to review semester progress and highlight any issues for second semester.	Submit Final Existing Conditions/Interim Deliverable

## January Term

While classes don't meet, this is generally an important time for group work, including travel as necessary. Students are expected to be available and working during this time (except for the holiday week between Christmas and New Year's). If faculty or team members are not available for some portion of this time, this should be made clear and discussed within each team, between team and faculty, and between team and client.

## Spring Semester

During this semester, much of the time will be set aside for teams to meet on their own or with faculty. 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.**

## Classroom Norms

You are expected to participate in each class with your Zoom audio and video on. Please review Wagner's [Zoom in the Classroom](#) series about classroom etiquette, participation, and more.

## Technology Support

You have 24/7 support via NYU's IT services. Explore the [NYU servicelink knowledgebase](#) for troubleshooting and student guides for all NYU-supported tools (NYU Brightspace, Zoom, etc). Contact [askIT@nyu.edu](mailto:askIT@nyu.edu) or 1-212-998-3333 (24/7) for technology assistance, or contact [Zoom's 24/7 technical support](#) (includes a chat function), or review [Zoom's support resources](#). Your peers are another source of support, so you could ask a friend or classmate for help or tips.

If you do not have the appropriate hardware technology nor financial resources to purchase the technology, consider applying for the NYU [Emergency Relief Grant](#).

## 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 the faculty.

## **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.