

# **NONCR-GP.108: Composing Your Career**

## **Fall 2021**

Friday, October 22 – November 12, 2021

2:00 - 3:40 PM ET, WSQ 60 5th Ave., Room 125

### **Instructor Information**

Alexandra Cobus, Associate Director, Career Services

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**Please reach out to your instructor/s if you have any questions or need assistance updating your class status on Albert.**

### **Course Description and Learning Objectives**

NYU Wagner prepares students for the real – sometimes messy, always complex – world of public service. To achieve this mission, we are dedicated to creating opportunities for students to discover the interrelationships of conceptual theory, practical realities, and individual career goals. This course will enhance your abilities to:

- Develop career planning skills and strategies through concentrated research, written assignments, and group discussions

- Identify at least one intended career field and develop a broad understanding of the various roles and organizations that influence that field
- Learn how to describe your professional interests in a strategic, informed way while practicing your networking skills
- Create a personalized 90-second “elevator pitch”

Throughout this course, you will use your experiences and education as the context for a series of analyses based on the following three lenses (i.e. What employers look “F.O.R.”):

- Field(s) that guide your commitment to public service,
- Organizations that are doing work in these fields, and
- Roles that you may want to play within these organizations.

Discussions and written assignments will use these lenses to teach how to process and reflect on past, current, and future work experiences. You will be encouraged to shift back and forth between lenses, between personal experience and generalized learning, and between strategic thinking and action items. All of this will lead to an action plan to maximize your time at Wagner in the pursuit of a successful public service career.

All discussions will be brought back to Composing Your Career (CYC). CYC is a framework for maximizing one’s time at Wagner and includes the “S.E.E.” strategies:

- Being Smart by choosing appropriate classes, using assignments strategically, and getting in the habit of reading professionally-related materials
- Gaining practical and relevant Experience in your field of interest and/or role
- Engaging with others who have similar interests through student groups, faculty, professional associations, and attending events (on and off campus, or virtually)

## **Assignments**

A series of assignments will be posted on NYU Brightspace. It is expected that you will complete all assignments before arriving in class, as they are essential for full participation.

# Grading

This course is non-credit and will not appear on your transcript. While there is no letter grade for this course, you will benefit based on the time and effort you put into the readings, assignments, and discussions. This course and your participation may greatly impact the development or deepening of your individual career goals and help you shape your public service career.

## Course Expectations

The following norms for behavior and performance are expected:

- Attendance at every session is required for this limited, four-session course
- Be fully prepared to discuss readings, videos and assignments
- Respect classmates' and instructors' contributions, comments or feedback

## Course Content and Schedule of Assignments

### Week 1: GETTING STARTED

Friday, October 22, 2021

#### Before Class: Required Reading and Videos:

WATCH the 3 CYC videos:

- [The Tracks Exercise](#)
- [What Employers Look F.O.R.](#)
- [The S.E.E. Strategies](#)

READ

- NYU Wagner OCS [Networking & Informational Interviews](#) Guide
- NYU Wagner OCS [Career Planning](#) Guide

ADDITIONAL READINGS (OPTIONAL):

- Jordana Valencia, "How to Keep Networking from Draining You," (Harvard Business Review, May 09, 2018).

- David Burkas, "Making Time for Networking as a Working Parent," (Harvard Business Review, May 23, 2018).
- Malcolm Gladwell, "Six Degrees of Lois Weisberg," (The New Yorker, January 11, 1999).

### **In Class:**

We will focus on preparing you to:

- Explore connections between the experiences and interests of your peers, diverse public service fields, and Wagner's various programs
- Frame your interests and career goals
- Understand how employers in your field(s) of interest make hiring decisions and what they look for in potential employees
- Set a series of strategies to maximize your time while in school so that you are better prepared and ready to engage in a successful career in public service
- Review Tracks Assignment (due in the 4th Session)

## **TRACKS EXERCISE**

### **I. Brainstorm**

Locate, download, scan or print any position description (job posting) that appeals to you on one of two levels:

- You're drawn to this kind of an organization. You like its mission. You'd like your work to have an impact on this issue, population or area. You like the agency's approach to the work. And you could see yourself, someday, working for an organization like this. Don't worry about where it's located or whether you like the job description that's attached to the organization. Just focus on the agency's overall purpose. Circle, underline, or highlight the part you like and save it in a folder (either hard copy or virtual).
- You're drawn to this kind of job description. You like the way the responsibilities are bundled. You like the skills needed to perform the function of the position, and you could see yourself, someday, doing something like this in your day-to-day. Don't worry about the agency the description is associated with or whether you have the skills to perform the job. Just focus on the actual job description. Circle, underline, or highlight the part you like and save it in your folder.

Do this until you have a bare minimum of 50 selected items. The more you collect, the better. Remember, when brainstorming, we don't evaluate along the way, we just collect ideas. Once you have at least 50, continue to the next phase.

## **II. Analysis**

Review the items in your folder and see if you can find any patterns or common themes. Some things to look for might include: issue, population to be served, approach to the work, geography, kind of organization, unit or department within an agency, and role.

## **III. Synthesis**

Using the data gathered from your brainstorming and analysis phases, create at least one and no more than five potential job tracks for yourself. A job track is a way to put parameters around and frame your potential career interests, and can include any of the following that have meaning for you: issue or field of interest; subcomponents of the issue that are of interest; approach to the work; kinds of organizations that do this work; where these organizations are located; size of the organizations; potential departments within organizations; roles or positions you imagine yourself performing; and the requirement of skills, education, experience, and knowledge to fulfill those roles; an assessment of current fit for those roles; and a plan of action to maximize time at Wagner and beyond to meet your goals.

Take stock of your qualifications and experiences as they relate to your potential tracks. Your tracks should connect to Composing Your Career and lead to a plan of action to maximize your time at Wagner using the S.E.E. strategies (Smart, Experienced, and Engaged): Your track(s) assignment should inform which courses you take, the professors you should get to know, how you use your assignments, the internship/job experiences you look for, the events you participate in, the groups you join, the people you seek out, and how you craft your message.

## **Week 2: FIELD, ORGANIZATION, AND ROLE**

Friday, October 29, 2021

## **Before Class:**

Read the required readings under the Field, Organization, and Role topic headings and contribute to the online discussion. Contributions will be used as a starting point for our in-class discussion.

## **FIELD**

Respond to the following prompt on NYU Brightspace online discussion board, prior to class:

Many of us are drawn to public service work with a desire to have an impact on a particular issue area, population to be served, or injustice that we want to eradicate. After finishing the assigned readings, take a moment to recall when you became aware of your field of interest/desire to do this kind of work. How might this influence your ability to see a bigger picture – both what happened before your discovery, as well as what has happened subsequently. How might your time of discovery be both a motivating factor as well as a limitation?

## **Readings for Field:**

- Colson Whitehead, "The Colossus of New York: A City in Thirteen Parts," New York: Doubleday, 2003: 4-5.
- Mayer N. Zald, "Making Change: Why Does the Social Sector Need Social Movements?" Stanford Social Innovation Review (Summer 2004): 25-34.
- Paul Vitiello, "Kiss Me, I'm Illegal," (The New York Times, March 26, 2006).
- Select one of the following issue timelines to review:
  - "[Healthcare Crisis: Healthcare Timeline](#)" (PBS Healthcare History).
  - "[U.S. Immigration Timeline](#)," (History.com Editors, A&E Television Networks, May 14, 2019).
  - "[American Civil Rights Movement](#)," (Encyclopedia Britannica Online Academic Edition. Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 2019. Web. 11 Jul. 2019).

## **ORGANIZATION:**

Respond to the following prompt on NYU Brightspace online discussion board, prior to class:

It's not unusual for us to be aware of the 3 or 4 most "in-the-news" agencies doing the work we're interested in. But there's a whole world of agencies that share a similar "space." After finishing the assigned readings, share your sense of how understanding a fuller landscape of agencies doing work in a particular arena might be helpful in composing your career – not only from the perspective of looking for a job, but also for being successful in a job or understanding the interconnectedness between various organizations.

**Readings for Organization:**

- "Articulating Mission and Vision," Strategic Planning: A Practical Guide and Workbook," The Support Center, 1994: 28-29
- Miriam Jordan, "Is America a Nation of Immigrants? Immigration Agency Says No," (The New York Times, February 22, 2018)
- Maria Cheng and Alexander G. Higgins, "Politics Play Big Role in World Health Decisions," (Associated Press, May 3, 2009)
- Jodi Sandfort and Micah Intermill, "Policy Field Analysis," Hubert Project, 2011: Policy Field Analysis

**ROLE:**

Respond to the following prompt on NYU Brightspace online discussion board, prior to class:

Everyone has the capacity to affect the culture and the impact of an organization. Some people hold formal authority, some people use informal authority, and others act with a combination of both. After finishing the assigned readings, reflect on the distinction between formal role and informal role. What are some ways to gain informal authority regardless of your title? (please share examples from your own experience, if possible)

**Required Readings for Role:**

- Skim the Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2012-13 Edition, US Bureau of Labor Statistics:
  - "Social and Community Service Managers"
  - "Medical and Health Services Managers"
  - "Urban and Regional Planners"
- Sadie Blanchard, "Policy Analysts: Shaping society through research and problem-solving," Occupational Outlook Quarterly (Spring 2007): 20-25.
- "Leading from the "Middle," Center for Applied Research, (September 04): slides 1-35.

**In Class:**

Readings and online assignments will be used for a large group discussion on the importance of understanding Field, Organization, and Role.

### **Week 3: CRAFTING YOUR MESSAGE - PART 1**

Friday, November 5, 2021

#### **Before Class:**

Imagine you are at the end of a virtual professional event when a guest industry speaker or faculty member suddenly asks you, "Tell me about yourself." You have 90 seconds to describe your professional identity before the session ends.

Elements to consider are:

- What do you know about what you want to do in the field of public service?
- Why do you want to do this? What do you already have going in your favor?
- Why are you at Wagner at this point in time?
- What organizations are you looking at?
- What are you doing/will you do to maximize your time at school to further your professional goals?

Practice your 90 second pitch. Seriously. Practice it.

#### **Required Reading:**

- Read: "Interviewing Guide: Crafting Your One-Minute Pitch," NYU Wagner Office of Career Services, 2017 (6-7).

In Class:

Every student will present and get feedback on their 90 second pitch.

Week 4: SYNTHESIS and CRAFTING YOUR MESSAGE - PART 2



Friday, November 12, 2021

**Before Class: Refine and practice your 90 second pitch**

**In Class: Each student will refine their 90 second pitch. Discussion will focus on helping you articulate what you have learned from this workshop, your own experiences, and those of your peers. Come prepared and ready to share your reflection on how you plan to implement learning from this class to compose your individual career.**

**Tracks/synthesis assignment is due:**

Create an action plan that clarifies a potential career path(s) and maximizes your time at Wagner and beyond. This written "tracks" assignment can include: specific field(s) of interest/issue area; subcomponents of the issue area that are of interest and why; approach to the work that resonates with you; kinds of organizations that do this work and why they appeal to you; where these organizations are located; size of the organizations; potential departments within organizations; roles you aspire to play and why; requirement of skills, education, experience, and knowledge to fulfill those roles; an assessment of current fit for those roles; and a plan of action to maximize time at Wagner and beyond to meet your goals.

**Future Action Steps (optional):**

- **Field:** Explore the history of the issue area in which you are interested. Include why this issue is a matter of public concern; the roots and evolution of the movement surrounding this issue; the language, jargon, key terms, and symbols that are evident when discussing this issue; the various policies and current debates connected with this issue; and major stakeholders. Identify when you become interested in this field, personally and professionally. Include why you are drawn to this issue.
- **Organization:** Identify a wide variety of agencies within your field of interest. Start creating a series of desired organizational profiles that include an organization's approach to the work, recipient of the services, sector(s), size, location, and anything else you find relevant. If possible, list specific organizations. Explain why you are drawn to these kinds of agencies, being mindful of the relationship between organizational mission statement and issue.
- **Role:** Conduct informational interviews to get a better understanding of role. Pick two possible roles or positions you may want to perform within an organization. Interview at least one person who holds each

of these roles. Describe the scope of their responsibilities, tasks they perform, requirements to fulfill the positions, skills that are required and useful, educational needs, years of experience required to fulfill these roles successfully, and anything else that may be enlightening.

- Plan on participating in any or all of the following during your time at Wagner (the sooner, the better):
  - Schedule a 30 minute career advising appointment (via phone or virtually) to discuss your career planning, networking plan, and/or practice your pitch, all year. Email [wagner.ocs@nyu.edu](mailto:wagner.ocs@nyu.edu) and schedule an appointment via [NYU Wagner's Online Career Directory](#) (click "Request an Appointment with a Career Advisor")
  - Plan to attend an OCS employer or industry expert information session, Career Panel or Workshop. More details can be found within [NYU Wagner's Online Career Directory](#) (click the "Events" tab).

## 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 instructors.

## **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