



**NYU**

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

**CAPSTONE: CAP-GP Advanced Projects in Policy, Management, Finance, and  
Advocacy I, Section 008 Fall 2023 – Spring 2024**

**Instructor Information**

- Palak Kaushal
- Pk1866@nyu.edu
- Office Hours: After class or by appointment

**Course Information**

- Class Meeting Times: Mondays, 6:45 pm - 8:25 pm
- Classroom: 70 Washington Sq S (Bobst) Room LL147 Loc: Washington Square

**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 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.

### d. 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.

### e. 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
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 have been identified for our section. You will review proposals, engage in the client presentations in the first class before marking your preferences. Once you are familiar with the projects, you will fill out a form which gives me your project rankings and other information. 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. You should expect to work approximately 5-10 hours a week, including class time, team meetings, and project work. 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.

Though Capstone is in-person this year, your team and client meetings do not have to be. Teams can work this out with each other and their client. I encourage the first and last meetings with the client to be in person if at all possible.

Travel is not anticipated for our section.

### Capstone Expenses:

Each capstone team is entitled to reimbursement of up to \$500 of Capstone related expenses, such as photocopying, supplies, etc. None of these funds can be spent hiring others to do work that you are expected to do, like 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 Brightspace course website.

## Evaluation and Grading

Students will receive 1.5 credits for the fall semester and 1.5 for the spring semester. You will be graded at the end of each semester. The grade at the end of the first semester will reflect your work, participation and learning to date. I will assign final grades at the end of the second semester. Your final grade will override your fall grade (that is, your fall grade will be changed to reflect your final grade.)

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. **60% is based on work products** such as interim and final deliverables as well as other assignments. **40% is based on evidence of the individual student's learning** during the course through participation in the team's work and class activities, their 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 Brightspace website for this course.

## 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:

- 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/May);
- 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.**

Note that all interim and final deliverables must come to me first before they go to the client. We may go through several rounds of revision before I feel the products are ready to be shared with the client.

Specific requirements for each class will be posted on Brightspace and emailed to you with enough lead time to prepare. **Instructions in email or Brightspace take precedence over what is written here.**

Please inform me in advance if you will miss a class or meeting.

9/11/23 <i>Monday</i>	<b>Syllabus &amp; client presentations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch What is Capstone?</li> <li>• Review syllabus and Student Capstone Guide</li> <li>• Review capstone proposals and come to class prepared with questions</li> <li>• In class: client presentations</li> <li>• <b>DUE 9/15:</b> Project preference form</li> </ul>
9/18	<b>Team formation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Watch consulting videos:</b> Intro, What Consulting Is and Isn't and The Role of Technical and Interpersonal Skills</li> <li>• <b>Reading:</b> Consulting Is More Than Giving Advice <a href="https://hbr.org/1982/09/consulting-is-more-than-giving-advice">https://hbr.org/1982/09/consulting-is-more-than-giving-advice</a></li> <li>• In class: Share contact info, set up group workspace, get to know each other</li> <li>• <b>DUE 9/25:</b> Team charter</li> <li>• <b>DUE 10/1:</b> Hold client kickoff -- must include professor</li> </ul>
9/25	<b>Client engagement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assignment:</b> Background research on your project</li> <li>• <b>Reading:</b> Master the Team Meeting <a href="https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/mastering-the-team-meeting">https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/mastering-the-team-meeting</a></li> <li>• <b>Reading:</b> The art of asking the right questions <a href="https://bigthink.com/the-learning-curve/art-asking-right-questions/">https://bigthink.com/the-learning-curve/art-asking-right-questions/</a></li> <li>• In class: Desk research about your client and engagement</li> <li>• In class: Questions about proposal / contract; hypotheses about how to add value</li> <li>• <b>DUE 10/1:</b> Hold client kickoff -- must include professor</li> <li>• <b>DUE 10/9:</b> Draft contract</li> <li>• <b>DUE 10/21:</b> Signed contract</li> </ul>
10/2	<b>Project management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reading:</b> If you have a complex project, follow "Gall's law" – or it will fail: <a href="https://bigthink.com/smart-skills/complex-project-galls-law/">https://bigthink.com/smart-skills/complex-project-galls-law/</a></li> <li>• <b>Optional Podcast:</b> Plain English with Derek Thompson: How the Digital Workplace Broke Our Brains_ <a href="https://open.spotify.com/episode/1YcRUyFe9RUpgKLJT1SGtX">https://open.spotify.com/episode/1YcRUyFe9RUpgKLJT1SGtX</a></li> <li>• In class: Report on client kickoff</li> <li>• In class: Map deliverables, hypotheses, analyses, tasks</li> <li>• <b>DUE 10/9:</b> Draft contract</li> <li>• <b>DUE 10/21:</b> Signed contract</li> <li>• <b>DUE 10/28:</b> Work plan</li> </ul>
10/10 <i>Tuesday</i>	<b>Team dynamics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reading:</b> Want Teamwork? Encourage Free Speech <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/13/jobs/want-teamwork-encourage-free-speech.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/13/jobs/want-teamwork-encourage-free-speech.html</a></li> <li>• <b>Reading:</b> Pulpit Bullies: Why Dominating Leaders Kill Teams <a href="https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/pulpit-bullies-why-dominating-leaders-kill-teams">https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/pulpit-bullies-why-dominating-leaders-kill-teams</a></li> <li>• Watch consulting videos: The Project Management Triangle, Client Expectations Mgmt, Risk Mgmt, Client Mtg Mgmt.</li> <li>• In class: Leadership Compass</li> <li>• <b>DUE 10/21:</b> Signed contract</li> <li>• <b>DUE 10/28:</b> Work plan</li> </ul>

10/16	<p><b>Literature review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review <a href="#">Wagner Capstone Library Guide</a></li> <li>• Use Bobst Library databases to find scholarly articles</li> <li>• Review examples of literature reviews</li> <li>• In class: Share results of research and discuss lit review examples</li> <li>• <b>DUE 10/21</b>: Signed contract</li> <li>• <b>DUE 10/28</b>: Work plan</li> </ul>
10/23	<p><b>Data collection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reading</b>: How to create more inclusive surveys: <a href="https://www.surveymonkey.com/curiosity/how-to-create-more-inclusive-surveys/">https://www.surveymonkey.com/curiosity/how-to-create-more-inclusive-surveys/</a></li> <li>• Discuss data requests, surveys, interview</li> <li>• <b>DUE 10/28</b>: Work plan</li> <li>• <b>DUE 11/19</b>: Draft lit review</li> </ul>
10/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In class: share updates</li> <li>• <b>DUE 11/19</b>: Draft lit review</li> <li>• <b>DUE 12/1</b>: Client-ready lit review</li> </ul>
11/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In class: Individual meetings with professor</li> <li>• <b>DUE 11/19</b>: Draft lit review</li> <li>• <b>DUE 12/1</b>: Client-ready lit review</li> </ul>
11/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>NO FORMAL CLASS</b></li> <li>• <b>DUE 11/19</b>: Draft lit review</li> <li>• <b>DUE 12/1</b>: Client-ready lit review</li> </ul>
11/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>NO CLASS</b></li> <li>• <b>DUE 12/1</b>: Client-ready lit review</li> </ul>
11/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present lit review in class, be prepared to discuss each others literature reviews and provide constructive feedback</li> <li>• Previous Capstone students will be present to talk about their capstone experience and answer questions</li> <li>• <b>DUE 12/3</b>: Self and peer evaluations</li> </ul>
12/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss course and peer evaluation results</li> <li>• Group work</li> </ul>
12/11	<p><b>End of semester update and break workplan</b></p> <p>Each group will present their progress this semester, plans for the break. Be prepared to provide constructive feedback on each groups progress and plans.</p>
January	<p>While classes don't meet, this is generally an important time for group work. Students are expected to be available and working during this time (except for the holiday week between Christmas and New Years).</p>

<i>Spring</i>	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, <b>so you must be available every Monday night during class time</b> . Also, for planning purposes, I've noted here some potential deadlines, <b>but these are preliminary and could change</b> .
1/22/23	<b>Team updates</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present progress updates</li> <li>• In class: Update work plan</li> <li>• In class: Review team charter</li> </ul>
1/29	<b>Looking ahead: Final reports and presentations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flip through examples of final reports from prior Capstones</li> <li>• <b>DUE 2/10</b>: Ghost deck for final presentation</li> </ul>
2/5	<b>TEAM MEETINGS</b>
2/12	<b>Preview: Final presentations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present ghost decks to class</li> <li>• <b>DUE 3/3</b>: Review preliminary recommendations with client (must include professor)</li> </ul>
2/19	<b>NO CLASS</b>
2/26	<b>TEAM MEETINGS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>DUE 3/22</b>: Draft final report</li> <li>• <b>DUE 4/3</b>: Final presentation ready for client</li> <li>• <b>DUE 4/3</b>: Meeting date set for final presentation to client</li> <li>• <b>DUE 4/24</b>: Final report ready for client</li> </ul>
3/4	<b>Client feedback</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In class: Share feedback from client on preliminary recommendations</li> </ul>
3/11	<b>NO CLASS</b>
3/18	<b>TEAM MEETINGS</b>
3/25	<b>Preview: Final presentations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In class: Practice "elevator pitch" of project impact</li> </ul>
4/1	<b>TEAM MEETINGS</b>



4/8	<b>Presentation rehearsals</b>
4/15	<b>TEAM MEETINGS</b>
4/22	<b>Getting the most from your Capstone</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Optional: Update LinkedIn with Capstone experience (not graded)</li> </ul>
4/29	<b>Self and peer evaluations</b>
5/6	<b>Reflect and celebrate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit final reports to <a href="mailto:wagner.capstone@nyu.edu">wagner.capstone@nyu.edu</a></li> </ul>

### **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 alternative

