



Taubman Center for Public Policy  
Capstone Seminar | PPAI 2900  
Fall 2014 – Spring 2015

**Instructors**

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**Time/Location**

Tuesdays, 6:00 – 8:20PM in the First Floor Seminar Room at Taubman Policy Center.

**Course Description**

The two-semester Capstone is the core of the second year experience for students in the Master of Public Policy and Master of Public Affairs programs. Prior to enrolling in Capstone, students are required to have successfully completed these courses: *Institutions and Policy Making* (PPAI 2000), *Economics and Public Policy* (PPAI 2010) and *Statistics I* (PPAI 2030).

Capstone is a rigorous and practical immersion with a client in a domestic or global community-based or institutional setting. It is focused on experiential learning and creative problem solving. Real world, complex contemporary problems are addressed, policy and practice-based solutions explored, strategies identified and future approaches recommended. Student teams conduct research to understand contemporary problems and issues and develop policy and practice-related solutions to address these issues and/or enhance an organization's capacity. Capstone focuses on the development of skills that are fundamental to successful teamwork and working with clients, consulting, project and time management, stakeholder identification and analysis, systems and strategic thinking and effective presentation of data. It delivers value for both community partners and students and prepares them for the transition to professional positions upon graduation.

The first semester is focused on enhancing project management skills, building teamwork and completing a comprehensive literature review to frame the work. The second semester emphasizes original research and analysis, synthesis, and presentation of findings, and client management skills.

## Learning Objectives<sup>1</sup>

### **Content**

Students should:

- understand the policy context for their project;
- be familiar with specialized vocabularies required to perform the project successfully;
- be aware of critical research related to their content area;
- be capable of positioning and evaluating their project within its broader policy context.

### **Process**

Overall, students should demonstrate capacity for flexibility and resilience, by adapting to changing circumstances, balancing competing demands and accepting uncertainty when necessary.

#### Project Management

Students should demonstrate the ability to:

- assess the client organization and its environment;
- frame and refine the problem presented by the client;
- develop a work agreement with the client for the project;
- develop an internal project work plan with timelines and deliverables;
- use workplan to monitor progress; revise the workplan as necessary;
- develop well-supported and realistic recommendations.

#### Client Management

Students should demonstrate the ability to:

- develop and sustain their relationship with the client;
- negotiate a work agreement with timelines and deliverables;
- maintain regular and productive contact with the client;
- solicit and integrate feedback on progress against the contract and modify as necessary;
- deliver final product to client's satisfaction.

#### Team Management

Students should demonstrate the ability to:

- understand group formation and development;
- understand the importance of interpersonal dynamics and team norms;
- develop clear role descriptions for team members;
- manage team assignments and accountability;
- advocate points of view and negotiate differences of opinion;
- solicit and offer feedback;
- appreciate and learn from cultural differences.

### **Research**

Students should demonstrate the ability to:

- identify appropriate data gathering and analysis methods for their particular project;
- carry out data collection methods appropriate for their particular project, potentially including surveys, interviews, focus groups, and use of existing datasets;
- situate their findings in the broader related literature;
- draw conclusions based on their findings;
- effectively communicate their research findings and analysis both orally and in writing.

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<sup>1</sup> The section is adapted from the Capstone course of the NYU Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service.

### **Projects: Request for Proposals**

Projects are developed as a result of a **Request for Proposals** to our networks. Students are encouraged to identify potential sites and projects, although this does not guarantee acceptance of a proposal. Consideration of potential sites for student team engagement will be a joint effort between the faculty and students. We will consider your preferences, but it is important to note that we will create teams and assign projects based on preferences, skills and prior coursework, work and life experience and the needs and skill-set requirements of the client. Teams are composed of 3-4 students. Further information about the project and team selection process is available in the Taubman Center Grad Guide.

### **Instructional Methods and Support**

Classes will include presentations by instructors and students, visits by skilled practitioners, class discussion and team meetings. Throughout the year, classes will meet weekly, either as a class or by team, so please reserve early Tuesday evenings for class time. During the second semester more class time will be set aside for teams to meet. One of us will be assigned to provide ongoing support to each team. Teams should meet with their faculty contact at least once a month. In addition, each team is required to seek out an expert faculty mentor who is available to advise the team as needed. All affiliated Taubman faculty have been asked to be available as team mentors.

### **Evaluation and Assignments**

Student assessment is based on performance in following assignments. Even though much of the work for the course is done in teams, grades are assigned on an individual basis. Therefore, students on the same teams can receive different grades. Detailed prompts for each assignment and related rubrics are posted on Canvas.

#### **First Semester (2014):**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>% Grade</b>
#1 Paper, Case Analysis	10% (Individual)
#2 Paper, Literature Review Practice	10% (Individual)
Summary of initial meetings with client	5% (Team)
Draft of Scope of Project, Workplan + Timetable	30% (Team)
Final Scope of Project. Timetable + Contract	
Presentation on Progress to Faculty Panel	30% (Team) <sup>2</sup>
Peer Assessment on Level of Participation in Team	7.5% (Individual) <sup>3</sup>
Overall Participation for Semester	7.5% (Individual) <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Team rubric will measure team preparedness, cohesion and quality of materials used in presentation.

<sup>3</sup> Each member of a team will rank anonymously the degree of engagement and effort other members invest in team, by assigning a portion of 100% of the effort.

<sup>4</sup> Grade based on attendance and degree of engagement in class sessions, meetings with faculty and in related activities and quality of questions and comments during class discussion.

## Second Semester (2015):

Assignment	% Grade
Literature Review Report: Summary of Findings	10% (Individual)
Research Report: Summary of Findings	10% (Individual)
Draft of final report and recommendations	35% (Team) <sup>5</sup>
Final report and recommendations	
“Dry-run” of Presentation	30% (Team) <sup>6</sup>
Final Presentation	
Peer Assessment on Level of Participation in Team	7.5% (Individual) <sup>7</sup>
Overall Participation for Semester	7.5% (Individual) <sup>8</sup>

### Required Texts

- Block, Peter. 2011. *Flawless Consulting, 3rd<sup>d</sup> edition*. Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer. (Check availability and price options on Amazon and on [www.designedlearning.com](http://www.designedlearning.com))
- Machi, L.A. & B.T.McEvoy. (2009). *The literature review: Six steps to success*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- W. K. Kellogg Foundation, *Logic Model Development Guide, 2004* (See **Canvas**)
- *HBR Guide to Project Management*, Harvard Business Press, Boston MA, 2013
- John F. Kennedy School of Government, Cases #1701 and #1702. (See **Canvas**)
- Final reports of selected 2013-2014 Capstone Teams. (See **Canvas**)

### Expectation of Students

Attendance and active engagement of each student in all class sessions and in all project team activities (field work, meeting with clients, preparation of reports, presentations) are fundamental requirements. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss any of the assigned readings and/or to actively participate in discussions and exercises. Submission of assignments on or before deadline is required. In addition, students in their relationships with clients are expected to follow high standards of professional conduct in their relationship with clients consistent with their role as consultants.

### Class Schedule

#### First Semester (2014)

September 9

- Introduction to course, timetable, syllabus, assignments and deliverables.
- Discussion of successful Capstone projects.
- Begin review of project proposals.
- **Required Reading:** Selected 2013-2014 Capstone reports. (see Canvas)

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix One/Rubric.

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix One/Rubric.

<sup>7</sup> See footnote 3 above.

<sup>8</sup> See footnote 4 above.

September 16

- Case Analysis/Competency building: basics of consulting: building relationships, understanding the problem, understanding the context, literature review, gathering data, reviewing options, recommending action.
- **Required Reading:** Kennedy School of Government Case #1701: *United Welfare and Child Welfare: the El Paso County Department of Human Services.*

September 23

- Building competency: introduction to consulting skills.
- Review and prioritize proposals. Identify organizations for follow-up inquiries.
- **Required Reading:** Chapters 19, 1 + 2 (in this order), *Flawless Consulting*

September 30

- Reports on follow up of project finalists; narrow choices of final projects.
- Survey students on preferences.
- Competency building: consulting skills (continued).
- Guest panel of consultants.
- **Required Reading:** Chapters 3, *Flawless Consulting*
- **Paper #1 due:** Case analysis: Kennedy School of Government Case #1702: *Child Welfare services in El Paso County, Colorado: Where Human Services and the Courts Meet.*

October 7

- Competency building: preparing for the literature review
- **Required Reading:**
  - Chapters 2, 4, 5, +6, *The Literature Review*

October 14

- Competency building: scoping out the project.
- **Requested Reading:** Chapter 4, *Flawless Consulting*

October 21

- Teams and projects confirmed.
- Basics of team process and management.
- Competency building: preparing for 1<sup>st</sup> client meeting.
- **Required Reading:** Chapter 5, *Flawless Consulting*

October 28

- First team meeting.
- **Paper #2 Due:** Literature review based on an assigned problem.

November 4

- Competency building: team building and management.
- Guest: Conley Zani, MBTI and teams. (to be invited)

November 11

- Competency building: project and time management.
- **Required Reading:** *HBR Guide to Project Management*, pages 3-162
- **Due:** Summary initial meetings with client.

November 18

- Competency building: making effective oral presentations.
- Guest: Hong Chau, Brown's Instructional Technology Group
- **Due:** Draft of Scope of Project, Workplan, Deliverables + Timetable

November 25

- Team Meeting: Preparation for December presentation.
- **Due:** Final Scope of Project, Workplan, Deliverables, Timetable + Signed Contract

December 2

- Progress Report Presentations to Faculty Panel.
- Team Meeting (For those not making a presentation.)

December 9

- Progress Report Presentations to Faculty Panel.
- Team Meeting (For those not making a presentation.)
- **Due:** Peer Assessment.

## **Second Semester (2015)**

January 27

- Review of second semester, timetables and deliverables.
- Data Gathering and Analysis: The logic model.
- **Required Reading:** *Logic Model Development Guide*
- **Due:** Literature Review Report.

February 3

- Data Gathering and Analysis, continued.
- **Required Reading:** Chapters 14 + 15, *Flawless Consulting*

February 10

- Competency building: organizing and framing the capstone report.
- **Required Reading:** 2013-2014 Capstone Reports.

February 24

- Team Meeting

March 3

- Guest Panel: Alumni practitioners in public policy and public affairs.
- **Due:** Research Report.

March 10

- Team Meeting

March 17

- Team Meeting

March 31

- Making recommendations and wrapping up project with client.

April 7

- Team Meeting: preparing for “dry run.”
- **Due:** Draft of final report and recommendations.

April 14

- “Dry Run” of Team Final Presentations
- Team Meeting (for those not presenting).

April 21

- “Dry Run” of Team Final Presentations
- Team Meeting (for those not presenting).

April 28

- Due: Final Report and Recommendations.
- Due: Peer Assessment.

May 1-13

- Final presentations.