

PAD 209 / PPOL 215 Capstone Seminar (CRN 56261, 53242)

Fall, 2008

SYLLABUS

Instructor:

Nancy Y. Augustine, PhD

MPA 614

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Class meeting:

Mondays, 6:10pm – 8:00 pm

2020 K Street, room 14

1. Course Description and Objective

Students will work in teams to design and analyze a substantive policy issue and present findings in response to a project scope of work developed by one of the clients and selected by the instructor.

This course is a capstone of your professional education and an introduction into the professional practice of public policy analysis. During this semester, you will draw on the tools and expertise garnered from prior coursework to analyze one or more important public policy problems. On the basis of that analysis, you will then develop recommendations for dealing with those problems to a client official or agency. All projects available for this semester are for real clients, addressing real policy and/or administration issues. You will be expected to complete the project on time, demonstrating high professional standards.

You can expect to apply skills in problem definition, issue framing, collection of data and information, interviewing, selection and analyses of alternatives, presentation of findings and recommendations, design of implementation tools and administrative procedures and organizations, report writing and oral presentation to policymakers, and appreciation of practical and ethical issues in the content of policy and the process of making and implementing it.

If you are **not** in your final semester of course work towards a Master's Degree, contact the instructor immediately to discuss whether you have had enough classes and experience to benefit fully from the class and to succeed in it. Your advisor will have to agree to your enrollment in the course.

2. Grading and Class Assignments

Your grade in the course will be based on three assignments.

A. Completion of On-Line Test on Protocols for Treatment of Human Subjects (10 percent)

Over the past several decades, there has been growing interest and pressures to ensure that researchers treat human subjects in an appropriate and ethical manner. Though much of this concern was originally directed toward medical research, a number of highly-publicized cases in the 1970s and 1980s have led to the development of both guidelines for ethical treatment of human subjects in social science research and a now-mandatory process that universities, think-tanks, and other associations engaged in social science research must follow to ensure that such guidelines are followed. Many of you will encounter what is now commonly referred to as the "IRB process" (where IRB stands for Institutional Review Board) in your professional work, and even when not subject to the IRB process, will still be called upon to act ethically

when working with human subjects. To familiarize yourselves with what this is all about, you will each be required to take and pass an on-line test on ethical treatment of human subjects in the social and behavioral sciences, and to meet and discuss issues discovered in the process of taking that test in a class session. Details of how to take and complete the test are posted on the Blackboard website.

B. Review and “Mini-Critique” of Past Capstone Projects (10 percent)

In order to give you an idea of what other students have accomplished in the capstone, and to exercise your own critical and analytical faculties, each of you will choose one of several past capstone projects that will be posted on the Blackboard website. Read the report as a policy professional who is about to embark on a similar project for another client. Prepare a short review of the study, no more than 3 pages, single-spaced in length.

1. Summarize the issues and/or problems addressed in the report (no more than half a page).
2. Is there enough background to orient you to the issue? What else should it have covered?
3. Does the text establish why the issue is important and why the research is important? Is it clear how the research was intended to help the client to address the issue?
4. What other strengths and weaknesses struck you as you read it? Describe some key characteristics, rather than attempting to present a comprehensive assessment of the study.

C. Capstone Project (80 Percent)

The major assignment will be to work on one of several capstone projects for a client who has requested our expertise. Study teams, each consisting of approximately five students, will each undertake a project for a client that has been selected by the instructor. Details of the projects are provided below. The project grade will be based on (a) the overall strength and quality of the report (75 percent of project grade, equivalent to 60 percent of class grade); and your individual contribution to the team effort (25 percent of the project grade, equivalent to 20 percent of class grade). The latter grade will be based both on the faculty advisor’s assessment and on the evaluation of your contribution to the project from your fellow team members.

3. Assignment to a Project

At the first class meeting, students will have the opportunity to *request* assignment to a specific project. All project assignments will be made by the instructor. Project assignments will be made considering individual students’ interests and expertise, as well as the needs of the project. Teams are likely to consist of members with varied backgrounds. Each member will be expected to bring his or her own perspective to the project. Each team will work with a faculty advisor.

Specific subject matter expertise is not required for assignment to any project. In previous semesters, some students have specifically requested projects outside of their area of expertise. Policy and management professionals are expected to be generalists, able to apply their analytical competencies to a wide range of policy, administration, and political problems.

When making your project request, consider not only the subject matter but also the tasks that are involved in the project. Notice that some projects will require more initial work with the client to better define the scope of work; some students appreciate the flexibility that this allows, while other students prefer more detailed work plans.

4. Project Process: Design and Execution

Each study team should contact their clients immediately following project assignment to set up a kick-off meeting. Aim to meet with the client during the second or third week of the semester.

Meet as a group prior to the meeting in order to develop a common understanding of the project, and to get a feel for the range of skills and expertise among team members. Use this opportunity to plan for the kick-off meeting. Identify a single team member who will serve as the contact with the client during the semester. In previous capstones, some groups have found it helpful to read and discuss some readings related to the project prior to meeting with the client. Contact your faculty advisor if you need help identifying appropriate materials.

At the kick-off meeting, you should ask the client to elaborate on the policy “problem,” provide any needed background on the organization or program, and discuss available data or resources. During this meeting, you should also find out how much the client wishes to participate in project development, and how he/she prefers to be contacted.

Following the initial meeting, you should refine the scope of work, identify the tasks involved, a timetable for their completion, and allocate responsibilities among team members.

The team will collect information, frame and analyze issues, prepare a report, including examples or drafts of any legislative instructions or administrative instruments necessary to implement recommendations, and develop strategy for moving the policy proposal through the appropriate policy making and implementation bodies. At the end of the semester, each team will present its work in written, graphic, and oral forms.

The faculty advisors will be available for consultation throughout the study period. Having to explain and defend decisions to the advisor is a valuable exercise that forces team members to think clearly and thoroughly. The advisor can also help study teams to navigate complex details, identify viable analytical strategies, understand and manage the client’s needs, and organize work to make maximum use of study team members’ time.

The work will be organized into the following (somewhat overlapping) phases:

- Problem definition, issue framing, fact-finding on problem and its causes
- Study design and adjustment to scope of work, if needed
- Collection and analysis of data and information and identification of policy options.
- Analysis of data and information to assess alternative policy options or approaches
- Development of findings and recommendations.
- Design of implementation strategy.
- Drafting of the report, including appropriate graphics
- Review and revision for the final report.
- “Mock” presentation to the class and a panel of additional instructors
- Formal presentation to clients

Presentation of the report will be made in a PowerPoint presentation to the client and other experts, sitting as a “jury,” to critique both the substance of the work and its presentation. Unless the client requests otherwise, plan for a 15-minute presentation, followed by 45 minutes of question and answer. This presentation should be structured so that each member of the team has a role. Note that this does not mean that every member of the team should participate in the initial, 15-minute presentation. On the contrary, switching speakers frequently during a short presentation can be distracting.

5. Class Schedule

Week of Monday...

September 8	Meet as a class on Monday, September 8. Introduction and class overview. Students submit project requests.
September 15	No class. During the week, meet as a group and meet with the client, subject to the client's availability. Commence project design, background research, and refinement of scope of work. Meet with faculty advisor as needed.
September 22	Meet as a class on Monday, September 22 to discuss ethics in social science research. Submit certification of successful completion of On-Line Test on Protocols for Treatment of Human Subjects. Read NYU IRB Guidelines for Capstone Students; the link is posted on Blackboard. During the week, continue project work.
October 6	No class. During the week, continue project work, and meet with faculty advisor as needed. Submit mini-critique of past capstone project.
October 13, 20, 27	Execute project design. Meet with the instructor as needed. Draft a working outline and make revisions as necessary.
Friday, October 31	Submit a working outline of the project report for review by the instructor.
November 3	Schedule a meeting this week with the instructor to receive comments on the working outline and discuss progress.
November 10, 17, 24, and December 1, 8	Develop draft report and start planning for the oral presentation for the client. Meet with the instructor as needed to finalize the report and prepare the oral presentation. MOCK PRESENTATIONS: Meet as a class on Monday, December 8. Schedule a final presentation with the client. Note the following dates: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Thanksgiving Break:</i> Thursday and Friday, November 27 and 28• <i>Designated date for make-up classes:</i> Tuesday, December 9• <i>Final exams:</i> Friday, December 12 – Saturday, December 20

6. Team Member Evaluation

Near the end of the semester, the instructor will distribute an evaluation form. Every student will be asked to evaluate the other members of his or her team on the basis of the following criteria:

Attendance at team meetings

Fairness

Timely written work

Consideration of others' views

Quality of contributions

Creativity

Leadership

Decisiveness

Problem solving

7. Projects

Students should view descriptions as a starting point for each project. Research teams should expect to refine the scope of work in consultation with the client and the faculty advisor.

A. Government of the District of Columbia - Department of Health

Project: HealthStat: Performance Measurement and Accountability Project

Contact: Dave Chandra, Special Assistant to the Director, DC Department of Health, and Interim Administrator, DC HealthCare Alliance

825 North Capitol St. Suite 4400, Washington DC 20002

Dave.Chandra@dc.gov; (202) 442-5829

The DC Department of Health strives to achieve continuous performance improvement and increased productivity in its service to residents. However, as with many government agencies, there often are bureaucratic inefficiencies and structural barriers to improving performance and enhancing service delivery.

The CapStat process, modeled after Baltimore’s CitiStat program and adopted by the Fenty Administration, “offers a methodical process for relentlessly and repeatedly focusing the attention of government on improving performance in high priority issues that cut across agency boundaries.”¹ It involves a targeted data-driven strategy session with all relevant city officials to review trends, identify gaps, develop priorities, and follow up on action items. The Department of Health seeks to develop a similar process – designated “HealthStat” - for internal accountability and performance improvement on health-related topics under the purview of the department.

DOH intends to partner with the GW CAPSTONE program to develop and implement the HealthStat process for agency-wide adoption. CAPSTONE project activities would include:

- Researching all programs currently administered by DOH, including their stated or required goals, target populations, and relevant performance measures.
- Identifying all DOH mandates and charges related to service delivery or oversight per statute and regulations.
- Compilation of all data sets collected and databases managed by DOH
- Listing of additional data sets and databases not currently administered by DOH by managed by other comparable urban area health agencies.
- Developing a plan for the collection and reporting of data related to DOH performance measures
- Preparation of template report and presentation for HealthStat sessions
- Preparation of a process for tracking next steps and follow up activities
- Preparation of a web-based applications for public dissemination of HealthStat outcomes

¹ <http://capstat.oca.dc.gov/WhatIsCapStat.aspx>

B. Partnership for America's Economic Success, Pew Charitable Trusts

Project: *Investment in Young Children: What Strategies are Other Countries Pursuing?*
Contact: *Elaine R. Weiss, Senior Associate, Partnership for America's Economic Success, The Pew Charitable Trusts*
1025 F St., NW, Suite 900, Washington, DC 20004-1409
eweiss@pewtrusts.org; 202.552.2052

Organization: The Partnership for America's Economic Success, a project housed at and managed through the Pew Charitable Trusts, is a collaboration of 13 funders whose goal is to make investments in young children the nation's top economic priority.

Project Description: This research agenda is the first phase of a three-part project. It involves the assembly of a body of solid research on the economic benefits to society of a range of policies to help children develop in their earliest years (prenatal to age 5). Among the main rationales/asserted needs for that project are increasingly international competition, and the need to produce a workforce that is ready to take on today's global-level challenges. The U.S. does not have that workforce, and it looks like it is increasingly less likely to produce one in the coming decades. There is also competition in the sense that, assuming that "investments" in young kids – prenatal to five – are effective and do give a country an edge, the U.S. is falling behind there, too. Western counterparts, not to mention China and India, appear to be making much smarter budgetary decisions, and putting a lot more resources into those kids, than we are. We want to know how that comparison plays out, which is what we want to get out of this project.

The idea for the project emerged from two basic sources: 1) the overwhelming response among states to economic research demonstrating that high-quality pre-k provides not only necessary support and school preparation for young children, but strong economic "returns" on the societal investment involved; and 2) broader research on critical brain development that takes place in children's earliest years, and thus the need to stimulate and nurture children properly during that time. The Partnership would like to assemble evidence similar to that of the pre-k return-on-investment for a broader range of early childhood policies and programs.

Policies we have explored range from quality child care and parenting education to health, nutrition, dental care, and housing, as well as pre-school education. We want to bring this research together, to paint both a more comprehensive picture of what children need from conception to kindergarten to start life well and have the best odds of becoming productive adults, and to provide states with a "menu" of good options for investments in children.

Recognizing that there are many important reasons to invest in children – among them, that children deserve a good and fair start, and a decent society should provide it – we believe that giving business leaders and policy-makers economic "weapons" in the fight for scarce budget dollars can help move children up the priority list. And among the strongest arguments about the need for an edge is that today's children compete in a global economy. Indeed, one of the reasons American parents, teachers, and policy-makers are so concerned is that our children are *not* competing well in terms of academic achievement and workforce preparedness. They rank below students from almost all other countries in science, math, and even reading comprehension. Also, likely not coincidentally, they are poorer, less healthy, and less well cared-for in their earliest years. So, given the role we believe is played by early childhood programs, a natural question is "what are our (Western) competitors doing with respect to investments in children, and how do we measure up?" This is the question we seek to begin to answer, or at least to explore, through this Capstone project.

Main research question: How and how much are other Western countries (as well as China and India) “investing” in their youngest children (prenatal to age 5), and how do we compare? Given the difficulty of answering this question – and the myriad ways in which we might tackle it – we hope that a Capstone group might provide exploratory research that would enable us to more effectively probe the issue. In particular, we would like to know:

- *Which data/data sets are available to make such comparisons?*
 - Which countries/international organizations collect and make available data on children’s well-being in their youngest years? What type of data/which areas of kids’ lives?
 - How are budgets or other measures of “investment” in children structured or accessible in different countries/international organizations?
 - What sorts of programs are accessible to children across countries, and would these make for good comparisons? What are the downsides to using these as measures of investment?
 - What are the challenges to using them/inability to make apples-to-apples comparisons, etc.?
- *Who are they key experts/people to talk to in various countries/international organizations?*
 - Governmental
 - Non-Governmental
- *Key publications?*
 - Government
 - Non-Government
 - Academic
 - Business?
- *2-3 main recommendations for how we should structure such a report, if it is possible/viable*

The final product should provide an inventory of available information. How do countries measure their investment in/spending on young children, and how do they measure children’s well-being (especially educational, health, and family income)? Given that, how reliable are the data sources, where do they come from, and, critical for our purposes, can they be used to draw comparisons? For the first part, a listing with minimal explanation is probably what we’re looking for, while the latter portion likely will require some narrative to explain it. Based on answers to those first two questions, we would like the group to come up with two to three sketched out ideas/proposals for how we might use the available data to achieve our ultimate goal of a report.

The results of the capstone project will be used in the development of a report that compares the types of, and levels of, investments in young kids made in the U.S. compared to our counterparts. This would help us make the case for increasing those investments here through two angles. First, if we are to keep up with our allies, who are also our competitors, we need to make similar investments. Second, their much better outcomes – in terms of test scores, adult health, and other predictors of societal well-being and economic advantage – are likely not a coincidence, but linked at least in part to our society’s under-investment.

C. Private Sector Office, Department of Homeland Security

Project: Social Networking and Emergency Preparedness

Contact: Gary Becker, Supervisory Economist, Private Sector Office, U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Gary.becker@dhs.gov; 202-282-9013

NOTE: THIS PROJECT DESCRIPTION HAS NOT BEEN FINALIZED. THE CLIENT MAY MAKE SOME RELATIVELY MINOR MODIFICATIONS TO THE SCOPE.

Organization: The Private Sector Office is part of the Department of Homeland Security Office of Policy. The Office of Policy strengthens homeland security by developing and integrating Department-wide policies, planning, and programs in order to better coordinate the Department's prevention, protection, response and recovery missions. The Private Sector Office

- Engages individual businesses, trade associations and other non-governmental organizations to foster dialogue with the Department.
- Advises the Secretary on prospective policies and regulations and in many cases on their economic impact.
- Promotes public-private partnerships and best practices to improve the nation's homeland security.
- Promotes Department policies to the private sector.

Project Description: Numerous new social networking sites and technologies have provided new ways for people to communicate, disseminate information, and establish new contacts. Up to now, many of these applications have been employed primarily for personal and commercial purposes. Could DHS make use of one or more of these technologies to promote homeland security-related objectives?

The Private Sector Office has asked students to report on social networking site and technologies, assess their potential for promoting homeland security outcomes, suggest guidelines and performance standards, and develop recommendations for potential implementation. Given that these technologies are relatively new and largely unknown to the client, consider the elements below as starting points for the project.

- 1) Review literature and written materials on several social networking enterprises. What are they? How do they work? Who uses them? What do we know about how the use of these enterprises proliferates?
- 2) Interview key players who are on the cutting edge of this issue for perspectives on capabilities, trends, and potential.
- 3) Interview or survey users for insight on the usefulness of the technologies.
- 4) Assess the potential for the social networking to promote different homeland security objectives. What form of communication and collaboration is best suited to each objective? Which technology or application can provide that form of communication and collaboration? Would the use of other more conventional means of communication hurt or hinder efforts to coordinate the message? Are there privacy concerns that could undermine implementation?
- 5) Develop a set of common performance metrics that help demonstrate the value of these tools.
- 6) What government policies should be considered to expand and how can these government policies hinder or help the development of these social networking tools.

D. CHF International

Project: How Can Information Technology Be Harnessed to Help the People in Urban Slums Leapfrog into the Modern Economic World?

*Contact: John W. Chromy, Vice President, CHF International
8601 Georgia Avenue, Suite 800, Silver Spring, MD 20910
JChromy@chfinternational.org; (301) 587 4700*

Organization: CHF International is one of the five largest NGOs implementing community-based development programs in 35 countries around the world. Its primary mission is to assist low-income communities develop their housing, infrastructure, economic base, health and education services. CHF also is very active in post-disaster and post-conflict reconstruction (see www.chfinternational.org)

Project Description: In partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, CHF is currently engaged in urban slum upgrading in 3 cities in India and 2 cities in Ghana. Urban slums are home to millions of low-income people and are growing phenomena in nearly every country. The particular issue needing the best possible research and analytical skills of a Capstone Group is the following:

In the 21st century the role of information technology (IT) is rapidly spreading throughout the world and has created huge new industries and economic opportunities for millions of people. Unfortunately, for the low-income and marginally educated people in developing world urban slums, the lack of IT knowledge, skills and technology is leaving them ever farther behind their middle and upper income peers. Electronic information technology appears to be widening the gap between the well off and the poor.

- How can IT be used to expand the capacity of banks and Micro-finance Institutions to make housing and small business loans available to people in urban slums on a massive scale?
- How can IT be used to provide 21st century vocational skills training responsive to the local job market to enable young people to be trained/train themselves for employment?
- How can IT enable bright young people in urban slums to access computer skills training and much higher quality education?
- How can IT be used to deliver health care services in communities little or ill served by conventional medical clinics/hospitals/pharmacies?
- How can IT be used to create new economic opportunities/home/community-based employment?

Throughout the world there are a variety of pilot efforts on all of the above topics. The Capstone Team would be asked to research these efforts, analyze the documentation and provide to CHF:

- Summary documentation of the most successful models and their strengths and weaknesses
- An analysis of which ideas/models have the best possibility of being taken to scale and implemented in the large cities of India and Africa.
- A set of ideas that may reflect additional or fresh approaches that might be useful.
- A business plan for implementing one suggested model

Use of results: the Capstone group can be assured that CHF will put to very practical use the information, analyses and ideas generated both in our current programs and our planned expansion of our urban slum programs in India and Africa in 2009-2011; ideas generated will have immediate impact on programs and presumably on improving the lives and futures of thousands and possibly millions of low-income people around the world.

8. School of Public Policy and Public Administration Policies

The following policies have been recommended by the faculty of the School of Public Policy and Public Administration. These policies are in addition to the expectations and standards laid out in this syllabus. Please contact the instructor if you have any questions.

1. Incompletes: A student must consult with the instructor to obtain a grade of I (incomplete) no later than the last day of classes in a semester. At that time, the student and instructor will both sign the CCAS contract for incompletes and submit a copy to the School Director.

The grade of I (incomplete) must be changed by a date agreed on by instructor and the student but no later than the last day of the examination period for the fall or spring semester immediately following the semester or summer session in which the grade of I is assigned. An Incomplete that is not changed within this period automatically becomes an F. In cases of well-documented extenuating circumstances, an instructor and a student may jointly petition the director of the student's degree program for additional time in which to complete the work of the course. Such petitions should be submitted within the same period. The grade of I cannot be changed by reregistering for the course here or by taking its equivalent elsewhere, and remains on the student's permanent record even after the course has been successfully completed.

2. Submission of Written Work Products Outside of the Classroom: It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that an instructor receives each written assignment.

3. Submission of Written Work Products after Due Date: Policy on Late Work

It is the policy of the School that all work must be turned in by the assigned due date in order to receive full credit for that assignment, barring any extenuating circumstances.

This policy does not apply to in-class examinations, which must be taken at the assigned time unless permission is received in advance from the instructor.

4. Attendance: Attendance is required. Should exceptional circumstances arise, students must contact the instructor prior to the class meeting to obtain an excused absence.

5. Academic Honesty: Please consult the "policies" section of the GW student handbook for the university code of academic integrity. Note especially the definition of plagiarism: "intentionally representing the words, ideas, or sequence of ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise; failure to attribute any of the following: quotations, paraphrases, or borrowed information." All examinations, papers, and other graded work products and assignments are to be completed in conformance with the George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity.

6. Changing Grades after Completion of Course: No changes can be made in grades after the conclusion of the semester.

7. Syllabus: This syllabus is a guide to the course for the student. Sound educational practice requires flexibility and the instructor may therefore, at her discretion, change content and requirements at any time during the semester.

8. Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: In order to receive accommodations on the basis of disability, a student must give notice and provide proper documentation to the Office of Disability Support Services, Marvin Center 436, 994-8250. Accommodations will be made based upon the recommendations of the DSS Office. Class sessions may be taped only in cases of documented necessity.