ANDEW YOUNG SCHOOL OF POLICY STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC MANAGEMENT & POLICY
PMA 8900: PUBLIC SERVICE CAPSTONE
CROSSLISTED WITH CRJU 8980: CAPSTONE SEMINAR IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE
Spring 2015

Instructor: Dr. Cynthia Searcy
Office: AYS Bldg., Ste. 629
Phones: 404-413-0124
E-mail: csearcy@gsu.edu

Dr. Joseph Hacker
Office: AYS Bldg., Ste. 328
Phones: 404-413-0139
E-mail: jhacker@gsu.edu

Class Time: T 7:15-9:45pm
Class Location: Aderhold 230
Office Hours: by appointment

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This purpose of this course is to apply the knowledge and skills of management, finance, economics, criminal justice and/or policy through a capstone project as a requirement for earning the Master of Public Administration/Policy or Master of Science in Criminal Justice degree. The capstone’s defining features are that students work on a project with a “real world” client, that the project requires integrating and applying knowledge acquired in multiple courses, and that students work as a team to complete the project. Learning to work effectively in teams is a major element of this course and an essential skill in any organization.

The course, as a capstone for students with a specialization in public policy, involves projects that may require service delivery assessment, operations analysis, program evaluation, fiscal analysis, or policy analysis. Student teams develop and assess options to address important problems facing public and nonprofit organizations. Projects vary, but all require implementing a work plan for evaluating a public problem, collecting and analyzing data, developing findings and recommendations, writing a final report, and presenting findings to the client.

Overall, students need to demonstrate a capacity for flexibility and resilience, as shown by adapting to changing and complex circumstances, balancing competing demands, and accepting uncertainty when it arises. In addition, students will develop and display skills in four areas:

1. **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 and implement a work agreement with the client for the project;
   - develop and implement a project work plan with timelines and deliverables;
   - monitor their progress against the work agreement and work plan;
   - revise the work plan as necessary;
   - develop a well-supported and realistic final product for the client.

2. **Client Management**
   Students should demonstrate the ability to:
   - develop and sustain their relationships with the client;
   - negotiate a project work plan with timelines and deliverables (the “contract”);
   - maintain regular and productive contact with the client;
   - solicit and integrate feedback on progress against the contract and modify as necessary;
   - deliver a final product to the client’s satisfaction.
3. Team Management
Students should demonstrate the ability to:

- understand the importance of interpersonal dynamics and team norms;
- create and periodically review their team charters;
- 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;

4. Research
Students should demonstrate the ability to:

- identify and carry out data collection methods appropriate for their particular projects, potentially including surveys and questionnaires, individual interviews, focus groups, and access to existing datasets;
- follow established sampling procedures to create appropriate samples for their particular project;
- identify and implement appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative data gathering and analysis methods for their particular project;
- situate their findings in the broader related literature;
- draw conclusions based on their findings;
- communicate their work effectively both orally and in writing.

CROSSLIST WITH CRJU 8980: CAPSTONE SEMINAR IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Students pursuing a Master of Science in Criminal Justice can take this course to fulfill requirements of CRJU 8980. Students will complete projects for clients with on a topic related to criminal justice and consult with faculty in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology for guidance on application of theory and methods appropriate to the field as they complete their projects.

PREREQUISITE
This course requires the completion of PMAP 8521 (Evaluation Research: Design and Practice) or a similar course petitioned to the department chair to replace it. Students pursuing a Master of Science in Criminal Justice are not required to take PMAP 8521 as a prerequisite. Students also are expected to have finished all courses in the MPA core and to be on track to graduate in 2015 (spring, summer, or fall).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
The class will involve presentations from the instructor, class discussion, and team meetings with and without the instructor. Course requirements include:

- attendance and participation in class activities and team meetings;
- completion of assignments on time;
- participation in field work and research;
- participation in meetings with clients; and,
- participation in preparation and presentation of findings.
EVALUATION

Students are graded on the deliverables provided to faculty and clients with evidence of learning compared to course objectives. The course has a series of milestones that will serve as interim work products.

COURSE MILESTONES

There are a set of milestones (activities and products) that are required of students. Time frames for milestones are found in parenthesis, though actual timing during the semester may vary depending on the situation of each team and client. HOWEVER, plan to submit milestones on the dates listed unless told otherwise. Students are responsible for keeping track of milestones as announced in class, posted on Desire2Learn, described by email from the instructor, or incorporated into team work plans.

These milestones and their respective grade weightings include:

- Development of team charter (Submitted to D2L on January 19th) Pass/fail 5%
- Final version of client contract and work plan signed by all team members and client, this includes work plan goals and schedule (Submitted to D2L on January 26th; Approved no later than February 3) Graded 15%
- Outline of final project report (Submitted to D2L on March 9th) Graded 20%
- Draft of report to faculty and client for feedback (Submitted to D2L on April 6) Graded 20%
- Oral presentation of project to class/faculty/client for feedback (April 7) Graded 5%
- Final revised report to faculty for approval (Submitted to D2L on April 28) Graded 20%
- End of course self/peer evaluations (Submitted to D2L on May 1) Graded 10%
- Poster presentation at Public Service Research End Event (May 5) Graded 5%

The Charter and work plan constitute the first milestone worth 20% of the grade. The outline of the report is worth 20% and is due week 9, on March 9th. The full draft of the report and oral presentations totals 25% and is due four weeks later on April 6-7th. The completed Final report will be worth 20% and is due on the 28 April. Finally, the poster event and the self/peer evaluations make up the final 15% of the student grade.

Considerable emphasis is placed on the process of scoping, data collection, analysis, draft recommendations and deliverables. This ensures that the final report is the best it can be and serves the client’s needs.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

1. Seventy percent (70%) is based on the quality of work products identified in the work plan as well as interim deliverables to the client or assigned by the faculty member. The timeliness, quality, and clarity-relevance of the deliverables will be evaluated in a professional light. Like any paying job, late assignments, bad attitudes, and poor quality deliverables would be grounds for termination. Treat this class like your job.
2. **Thirty percent (30%)** is based on evidence of the individual student’s learning through participation in the team’s work and class activities and his/her ability to act on peer and faculty feedback (team norms/charter and any revisions during the course). These include:

- development and adherence to team charter and work plan;
- individual and team work progress shown in weekly faculty meetings on the project;
- individual and team preparation for all client meetings on their work project;
- end of semester peer and self-evaluations;

Grades are the responsibility of the instructor, but the clients will be consulted regarding their judgment of the quality of the written product and the team’s overall work.

Each team member may receive the same grade based on our evaluation of the team’s work. In circumstances where there is clear evidence of uneven contributions among team members, adjustments may be made to an individual team member’s grades. Written peer evaluations will be required near the middle of the semester and at the end of the team’s work. These peer evaluations (as well as the client feedback and faculty observation and judgment) will provide a basis for assigning different grades among team members.

Timeliness and meeting deadlines are important aspects of professional behavior. Accordingly, late projects will have their grade penalized. The major milestones are outlined above. Teams who do not submit materials on time or by agreement with the faculty advisor will have their grade lowered a full grade (e.g., A- to a B-).

**GRADES**

Grades will be assigned according to the following criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93 – 100 A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 - 92.99 A-</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88 - 89.99 B+</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83 - 87.99 B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 - 82.99 B-</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78 - 79.99 C+</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73 - 77.99 C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 - 72.99 C-</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 - 69.99 D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 - 59.99 F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Excellent: Exceptional work for a graduate student. Work at this level is unusually thorough, well-reasoned, creative, methodologically sophisticated, and well-written. Work is of exceptional, professional quality.

A- Very Good: Very strong work for a graduate student. Work at this level shows signs of creativity, is thorough and well-reasoned, indicates strong understanding of appropriate methodological or analytical approaches, and meets professional standards.

B+/B Good: Sound work for a graduate student; well-reasoned and thorough, methodologically sound. This is the graduate student grade that indicates the student has fully accomplished the basic objectives of the course.
B-/C+ Adequate: Competent work for a graduate student even though some weaknesses are evident. Demonstrates competency in the key course objectives but indicates that understanding of some important issues is less than complete. Methodological or analytical approaches used are adequate but student has not been thorough or has shown other weaknesses or limitations.

C/C- Borderline: Weak work for a graduate student; meets the minimal expectations for a graduate student in the course. Understanding of salient issues is somewhat incomplete. Methodological or analytical work performed in the course is minimally adequate. Overall performance, if consistent in graduate courses, would not suffice to sustain graduate status in “good standing.”

D Deficient: Inadequate work for a graduate student; does not meet the minimal expectations for a graduate student in the course. Work is inadequately developed or flawed by numerous errors and misunderstanding of important issues. Methodological or analytical work performed is weak and fails to demonstrate knowledge or technical competence expected of graduate students.

F Failure: Work fails to meet even minimal expectations for course credit for a graduate student. Performance has been consistently weak in methodology and understanding, with serious limits in many areas. Weaknesses or limits are pervasive.
COURSE ELEMENTS AND TIMETABLE

This section provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary.

The course can be divided into the following components:

- Team Charter Development – Week 1
- Work Plan Development & Implementation – Weeks 2-14
- Final Report Drafting and Revisions – Weeks 9-14
- Prepare and Deliver Client Final Report and Presentation – Weeks 13-16 (finals week)

Each of the components is described more fully below. Components overlap as students begin organizing and writing their final reports and continue to work on their projects.

**Week 1: Team Charter Development**

Team members will be advised on how to write a team charter, which will govern how students complete their client projects. Each team will develop expectations for conduct and work products. Teams must identify roles of individual members, workload requirements, and a process for resolving conflict. Charters must be signed by all team members and approved by the instructor.

Charters should have instructor approval by the beginning of class in Week 2 (January 27).

**Weeks 2 – 14: Work Plan Development & Implementation**

Teams will develop and finalize their work plans and schedules with their clients and instructor to complete the project. The instructor will schedule weekly meetings when teams will report on project progress and issues, and instructors will assess progress and provide advice. Teams are expected to work towards completion of their projects outside of the weekly meeting with the instructor and/or class. Students should expect to spend about 3 hours on the project at a minimum for every scheduled class hour, or about 10 hours total per week.

In addition, the class will meet as a whole approximately once per month during the scheduled class period. These sessions will deal with common problems and tasks.

**Weeks 9 – 16: Final Report Drafting and Presentation**

The outcome of the capstone project is a final report to the client and a presentation for the client based on that report. The written report will be submitted twice to the client, once as a draft for feedback and a second time as a final product on the day of the client presentation and/or capstone event. Additional faculty review is expected at each step in the process and prior to any distribution.

The procedure for submitting a final written report to the client requires these steps:

1. Submission of a draft of the report to the instructor and client;
2. Meeting with the faculty member and client to receive comments and suggestions for revisions;
3. Preparation of a revised report and submission to the faculty member for approval; and,
4. Approval from the faculty member to submit the report to the client.

Professional work typically is revised several times before final submission. **You should anticipate the need for revising your final report and allow sufficient time for this process.** After submitting the final report on April 28, **you will be asked to make edits before sending it to your client.**
PUBLIC RESEARCH & SERVICE END EVENT

The last class meeting scheduled during our final exam period will be a capstone end event in which all capstone teams are expected to present their findings to the AYS community and their clients (if present). This is a festive yet professional occasion that all AYS faculty and students are invited to attend.

Desire2LEARN

This course will be managed through Desire2Learn (D2L), an internet-based information display system. D2L will be the primary means of communication for this course. You will find the course syllabus, assignments, class lecture notes, course announcements, discussion board, etc. on the D2L site. Please make sure you use the email address associated with the D2L system so that you will receive my messages for the class. Please take some time to learn how to use this system and get familiar with its contents early in the semester.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC HONESTY

I expect students to abide by the academic rules and regulations established by Georgia State University. Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the Georgia State University Graduate Catalog 2014-15. By registering for this course, you acknowledge your awareness of the Academic Honesty code, and you must become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the code. Any violation of the University’s academic honesty policy will result in an F for the course.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

If you have any condition, such as a physical or mental disability, which will make it difficult for you to carry out the work as outlined above or which will require extra time on examinations, please notify me in the first two weeks of the course so that we may make appropriate arrangements. Students who wish to request accommodation for a disability may do so by registering with the Office of Disability Services. Students may only be accommodated upon issuance by the Office of Disability Services of a signed Accommodation Plan and are responsible for providing a copy of that plan to instructors of all classes in which an accommodation is sought.

TEXTS

There are no required texts for this course. However, you will be required to research background material required for your project, review and apply recent research related to your project, and find resources related to the research method you will employ to complete your project.