

PPUA 7673: CAPSTONE IN URBAN AND REGIONAL POLICY
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY AND URBAN AFFAIRS
NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
SPRING 2017

Instructor

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Office Hours: TUES 7-8 PM, and by appointment

Course Meetings

TUES 8-10PM, Behrakis 750

Course Description

This course provides a faculty-guided team project for students completing course work in urban and regional policy studies, including students doing the Masters of Urban and Regional Policy, the Masters of Law and Public Policy, and the Graduate Certificate in Urban Studies. The goal is for students to apply what they have learned in their academic coursework in a real-world professional setting working on a project for a client. As you work towards completion of the project, we will work on developing a number of professional skills, including: work plan formulation and project management; professional writing; developing feasible recommendations; client interaction; professional presentations; and effective group dynamics.

Projects and Teams

You will be divided into project teams of four to five students based on some combination of your interests, your preferred team members (if any), and my discretion. The initial scope of work for each project has been drafted and will continue to be refined in the first few weeks through meetings with the faculty advisor and the client. The deliverables to the client will include a final written report of 20-30 pages and a one hour presentation for the client, faculty advisor, myself and any other stakeholders.

The instructor and faculty advisors for this course will help guide each team. This will include advice on helping to define the scope of work, locate useful resources, think through challenges and obstacles, and provide general feedback on the report and presentation. However, all of the work will be student-driven and the amount of time, thought, and creativity that you put into the project will determine the quality of your learning experience as well as the ultimate product delivered to the client.

Course Meetings

This class will be project-driven and largely student-run. Most of our class sessions will be collaborative project planning and management meetings. If the group and the instructors agree, we may also occasionally use class time for project-related work outside class. Note that we will only meet as a class when there is a formal lecture for instruction. The weeks that there is no class meeting you are expected to meet as a team and also have a quick check-in with me either in-person or via skype.

Grading: Your grade will largely depend on the output of your group's work with the exception of an individual memo to be written independently. The remaining parts of your grade will be based on the quality of the final report and presentation that you deliver to the client and your

performance in the project as evaluated by your peers. At the end of the semester, each student will be asked to fill out a peer evaluation survey in which you will evaluate team members and yourselves on the quantity and quality of your participation in the project. This survey will form the basis for the instructor's evaluation of your participation in the class, and will be factored into your final grade. Your final grade for this class will be calculated based on the following factors:

Individual Research memo: 20%
Final report: 35%
Final presentation: 20%
Peer evaluation: 25%

Ungraded Assignments: Note that there will be several ungraded intermediate products that will be required before the final report is submitted to the client—these are intended to help you set and achieve intermediate goals so that the project remains on track, and to allow the instructor to give you feedback. Guidance on each of these deliverables will be provided during the instructional portion of the class time in advance of the due date. The following are key dates for the intermediate and final products for the class:

Week of January 11-20: Client kickoff meetings. These meetings will be scheduled by the team and will be subject to the availability of your client, team members, the instructor, and the faculty mentor. The purpose is to get to know your client and discuss the workplan that you will be developing.

Tuesday, January 24: Draft workplan for the project is due. This document will detail your team's plan for completing the project within the time frame of the class. It will be developed in conjunction with your client and faculty advisor after one or more meetings.

Tuesday February 28: Individual research memo is due. During the first few weeks of class we will be identifying research tasks related to your projects. Each of you will be undertake an individual research assignment determined by your group's discussion of the needs of the project. The output for this research assignment will be a professional memo that you will submit to your instructor. This memo will serve two functions. First, it will provide a report on your research that can potentially be inserted into your final report and be used in making recommendations to the client. Second, it will give the instructor an opportunity to give you individual feedback on your professional writing skills and serve as a basis for the determination of your final grade.

Tuesday March 28: Draft presentation of your recommendations due. Your group will present their draft recommendations in a one-page memo as well as a brief 7-10 minute presentation to the class during a workshop session that will be attended by guest experts. This is an opportunity to get early feedback on your initial findings and recommendations before finalizing the report.

Tuesday April 4: First draft of the final report due. Based on your work to date, your group will write a first draft of your final report, including the key recommendations.

Tuesday April 18: Final report due. Your final report should be delivered via email and hard copy to your instructor no later than 8PM. This will serve as the basis of your presentation to the client. It is expected that the team will spend the remaining class time developing a polished presentation.

Week of April 19-28: Presentation to the client. These presentations will be scheduled by the team and will be subject to the availability of your instructor, your advisor, and your client.

Draft Schedule for Course Meetings

Please note that this is only a draft and that dates and class topics may change.

Date	In class	Product due
Jan. 10	Introduction to the class Instruction: The planning process, working in groups	
Jan. 11-20 Jan 17	Client Kick-off Meetings (to be scheduled) Lecture: Workplans and Project Management Group work: Develop workplans, assign roles and tasks to each team member	
Jan. 24	No class: check in with instructor either in person or via skype	Draft Workplan emailed to instructor and faculty mentor
Jan. 31	Lecture: Research Tools Group work: Discuss progress on individual research and next steps	Final Workplan emailed to instructor, faculty mentor and client
Feb 7	No class: check in with instructor either in person or via skype	
Feb. 14	Lecture: Individual Memo Group work: Discuss progress on individual research and next steps	
Feb. 21	No class: check in with instructor either in person or via skype	
Feb. 28	Instruction: Report Writing Group work: Draft outline of report and assign sections for writing	Individual research memo, print out and hand in class
Mar. 7	Spring Break: No class	
Mar. 14	Instruction: Drafting Recommendations Group work: Draft one-pager and presentation of recommendations	
Mar. 21	No class: check in with instructor either in person or via skype	
Mar. 28	Workshop Session with faculty mentors and other outside experts	One-pager and 10 min presentation on draft recommendations
Apr. 4	No class: check in with instructor either in person or via skype	Draft report emailed to instructor and faculty mentor
Apr. 11	Instruction: Presentation skills Group work: Develop outline of presentation	
Apr. 18	No class	Final Report
Apr. 19-28	Final presentation to client (to be scheduled)	

