

PPUA 7673: CAPSTONE IN URBAN AND REGIONAL POLICY
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY AND URBAN AFFAIRS
NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
SPRING 2022

Instructor

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Office Hours

THURS 11-12 PM (over [Zoom](#))
By appointment (email to inquire)

Course Times and Locations

TUES 4:00-5:00PM Class meetings: In-person: Ryder Hall 156
Remote: [Zoom Link](#)

THURS 4:00-5:00PM Client/Team meetings (TBD by each team)

Correspondence

When emailing about class-related issues, **please put [PPUA 7673] in the subject line**. For most issues it's likely that if you have a question, then so do your classmates. As such, it would be useful if you can also post those questions to the class discussion board.

Course Description

This course provides a faculty-guided team project for students completing course work in any of our master's degree programs. 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 such as:

- Defining the scope of work
- Creating productive group dynamics
- Maintaining client relationships
- Managing work flows
- Building research-practice partnerships
- Making use of research evidence
- Developing feasible policy recommendations
- Writing professional reports
- Giving effective presentations

Projects

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.

Team Dynamics

The instructor and faculty advisors for this course will guide 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 zoom.

Attendance is mandatory

Aside from Week 1, each week **class time will be divided into two parts:**

- All Class Meeting (TUES) – together as a class either in-person or on zoom
- Client/Team Meeting (THURS) – reserved for group project work either in-person or on zoom
- **Keep these times sacred – DO NOT schedule work meetings, travel, or other activities during these course times.**

Our **All Class Meetings** will alternate between weeks with a lecture and weeks without.

- Weeks with a lecture will be a combination of my lecturing from "the front of the room" for the first 15 minutes followed by group project work.
- Weeks without will be reserved for checking in with me as a group
- At this time, I will plan to lecture **in-person on Feb 8, Mar 8, and April 19**. If conditions change, lectures will be conducted over Zoom.

Your **Client/Team Meetings** will be the time that is reserved for group project work. To get the most of out of that time, I would strongly urge you to use these times to:

- **Schedule a regular bi-weekly meeting with your client** to get regular feedback and assign one team member to send an agenda at least one day before the meeting.
- On the alternating weeks hold **regular bi-weekly internal group meetings** and assign one member to send an agenda at least one hour before the meeting.

Zoom Norms

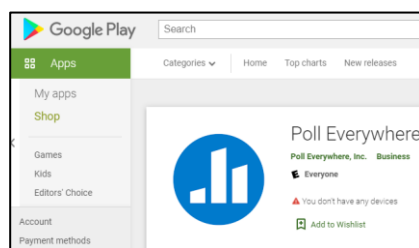
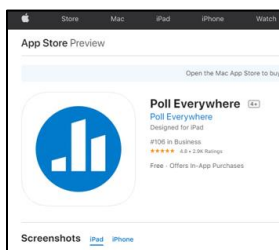
Some useful norms to enable us to spend our time together more productively:

- **Please keep your camera on during class.** We are a learning community, and we build community when we're there for each other, accountable to each other, and fully engaged in our shared learning. You may temporarily turn off your camera if you need to briefly attend to something you'd rather keep off screen (e.g., stepping away to use the restroom, finishing up a meal, etc.).
- **Please display your name in your Zoom window.** I want to get to know you!
- **Please ask questions.** To do so, use the hand-raising feature in Zoom, and/or type your question in the chat window. I will call on you.
- **Please keep yourself muted in larger lecture settings.** In smaller breakouts, we will unmute you to allow for a more natural interaction.
- **Zoom backgrounds can be used as needed.** Privacy is fine; distraction is not.
- **Please use the Zoom chat vigorously.** The most successful Zoom sessions often have a raucous set of conversations among participants, even as the instructor drones on. But please keep your conversation respectful and relevant to the material we're discussing.

In-Class Polling

To make life more interesting, we will use some in-class polling this semester.

1. Download the PollEverywhere app for free via the [Apple store](#) or [Google Play](#) or on a laptop, go to <https://www.polleverywhere.com/>
2. Join my presentation: ALICIAMODESTINO342
3. Enter your first name and last initial as your screen name
4. You will be asked to login and register using your MyNortheastern credentials
5. Then answer the poll when I make it activated during class!



Readings

There will be **mandatory supplemental readings posted on Canvas** that relate to the topic of the Reflection Posts.

Online Reflection Board

You will be required to participate in an online reflection board 5 times during the semester by posting a 300-500 word response to the prompt provided on canvas. The writing prompt will be based on the readings for that week and will be preparation for the lecture that will take place in class. The goal is to ensure students are intentional about the learning that takes place during the capstone course.

The reflection board writing prompt will be assigned one week in advance and will be based on the readings for that week. The response is required to be posted **no later than Tuesday before class and will be graded as pass/fail**. Note that the writing style in a discussion forum is generally a bit more casual than in formal papers or weekly written assignments but should still maintain proper grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure. I highly suggest following these [guidelines](#).

Grading

Your grade will largely depend on the output of your group's work with the exception of your participation, reflection posts, and individual memo. 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. Assignments will be **penalized 10% per day** unless you have a medical or family emergency. Any of these assignments submitted **more than 48 hours after the due date receive no credit**.

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 Participation: 10%
- Individual Reflection Posts: 10%
- Individual Research Memo: 10%
- Group Final Report: 25%
- Group Final Presentation: 25%
- Group Peer evaluation: 20%

Written Assignments

All written assignments will be submitted via Canvas. Reports should be double-spaced with 1" borders and carefully proofread before submission to the instructor. Please be aware that lack of citing sources constitutes plagiarism and an assessment of "F" followed by academic disciplinary action. We will be using APA style for all written assignments. To assist you, see the [Purdue OWL](#).

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 24-28: 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, February 1: 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, March 8: 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 April 5 and 7: 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 12: 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 26: 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 26-29: 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. 18	Introduction – All sections combined	Reflection Post 1
Jan. 20	Lecture: The Planning Process	
Jan 25	Lecture: Workplans and Project Management Group work: Develop workplans, assign roles and tasks to each team member	
Feb 1	No lecture: check in with instructor either in person or via zoom	Draft Workplan emailed to instructor and faculty mentor
Feb 8	Lecture: Research Tools	Reflection Post 2
IN- PERSON	Group work: Discuss progress on individual research and next steps	
Feb 15	No lecture: check in with instructor either in person or via zoom	Final Workplan emailed to instructor, faculty mentor and client
Feb 22	Lecture: Research Practice Partnerships Group work: Discuss progress on individual research and next steps	Reflection Post 3
Mar 1	No lecture: check in with instructor either in person or via zoom	
Mar 8	Instruction: Report Writing	Individual research memo, submit on Canvas
IN- PERSON	Group work: Draft outline of report and assign sections for writing	
Mar 15	Spring Break: No class	
Mar 22	Instruction: Drafting Recommendations Group work: Draft one-pager and presentation of recommendations	Reflection Post 4
Mar 29	No lecture: check in with instructor either in person or via zoom	
Apr 5	Workshop Session with faculty mentors and other outside experts	One-pager and 10 min presentation on draft recommendations
Apr 7	Workshop Session with faculty mentors and other outside experts	
Apr 12	No lecture: check in with instructor either in person or via zoom	Draft report emailed to instructor and faculty mentor
Apr 19	Instruction: Presentation skills	Reflection Post 5
IN- PERSON	Group work: Develop presentation materials	
Apr 26	No lecture: check in with instructor either in person or via zoom	Final Report, submit on Canvas

Other Policies and Procedures

Electronics: All cell phones, tablets, iPods and other electronic devices should be completely turned off and put away during class time or your class participation grade will be lowered. If use of personal technology becomes a recurrent issue, you will be asked to leave class and will not be given the opportunity to make up any missed work.

Accommodations: Please let me know as soon as possible if you believe that you require accommodations for any type of disability. All requests for accommodations must be cleared through the University's Access Office before I can work with you to develop an accommodations plan. University rules do not permit me to provide any retroactive accommodations.

Participation: I expect that each of you will approach the readings and lectures with an open mind and that class discussions will always be conducted at a scholarly level and in a tolerant and respectful atmosphere.

Assignments may not be made up without official written verification (from your doctor or the NU residence life office) of serious illness or a death in the family. If you anticipate a conflict with a scheduled exam you *must* come and talk to me as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity: All students are expected to do their own work on the reflection posts and individual memo. All works referred to in these assignments must be cited in a bibliography and/or footnotes. Please be aware that all students in the course are responsible for knowing and understanding the academic policies and procedures of the university to which they are expected to adhere. These regulations are outlined in the Graduate Student Handbook, which can be found [here](#).

Ethical Community Engaged Research: As faculty and staff associated with the Social Impact Lab at Northeastern University, we aspire to make a positive contribution in the communities where we live, work, and visit. We are mindful that community-engaged teaching and research (CETR) are not neutral acts; they can both benefit and harm the people they touch on and off campus. We recognize our obligation to optimize the benefits while also anticipating and mitigating the unintended negative consequences that can result from inserting ourselves and our students into other people's lives and communities with the intention to learn, "do good," and effect change. This awareness is especially important when we do not share the identities and lived experience of people in the communities we enter. Please read and follow the university's [Principles of Ethical Community Engaged Teaching and Research](#).

Class Participation Grading Rubric

Your class participation grade will reflect your regular attendance in class and your active participation in discussions and small group work for our policy debates. The grades will be assigned using the following scale. At mid-semester, if you would like, you may submit to me an e-mail letting me know where you think you fit on the scale and why. We will then discuss any differences between your perceptions and mine, and go over strategies for improved participation.

Grade = A	You attend almost every class and come prepared, demonstrating that you have done the assigned readings. You contribute readily to the conversation but do not dominate it; make thoughtful contributions; show respect for other viewpoints and are actively engaged in small group work.
Grade = B	You attend class regularly and are usually prepared for discussion. If you contribute frequently to class discussions, you either talk too much, make only tangential contributions or do not take an active role in small group work. Or you may be an active listener and small group participant, but are shy and make infrequent contributions to the full class discussion.
Grade = C	You have missed more than a handful of classes. Or you are often unprepared and rarely participate in a way that meaningfully advances our discussion.
Grades = D/F	You rarely attend class. Or you attend but do not participate at all in class or participate in a way that is rude, hostile or disruptive. You may also disrupt class by arriving late, leaving early or using cell phones or other personal technology.
