

Capstone Project – 834.563.01

School of Public Affairs and Administration

Rutgers University-Newark

Course Syllabus (subject to change) – 01 January 2018

Please consult Blackboard for the most recent syllabus

Sebastian R. Jilke, PhD

sebastian.jilke@rutgers.edu

Classroom: ENG 303

Office: CPS 326

Office hours: by appointment

Meeting time: Tuesdays, 06:00 – 08:40pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The *Capstone course* provides graduating students in the MPA program with an opportunity to integrate learning from various courses with applied analysis of real-world issues. As it is required in the final semester of the MPA program, this course is designed as a culminating experience in which students draw upon the knowledge and skills they have gained throughout the degree program. Students will work individually to develop and conduct an original and independent research project. In the conception and completion of the capstone project, students will:

- (1) Identify an organizational, program, or policy issue, problem, or concern, and present relevant contextual and background material;
- (2) Articulate a research question regarding this issue;
- (3) Review relevant public administration and management literature, including theoretical frameworks and best practices;
- (4) Select appropriate data sources, data collection methods, and analytical methods;
- (5) Analyze data and interpret these results;
- (6) Develop conclusions and recommendations derived from the analytical findings; and
- (7) Complete a final written report and oral presentation, which effectively communicates this capstone research project.

At the conclusion of this course, students will have developed and demonstrated effective analytical, critical thinking, problem solving, and communication capacities, which are crucial capacities for successful public or nonprofit leaders and managers.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this seminar, students will be able to achieve the following student learning outcomes:

1. To be able to lead and manage in public governance.
2. To participate in and contribute to the public policy process.
3. To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions.
4. To articulate and apply a public service perspective.
5. To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenship.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK AND MATERIALS

O'Leary, Zina. 2017. *The Essential Guide to Doing Your Research Project*, 3rd edition. SAGE. ISBN 9781473952089.

Students will also read additional items as appropriate for their Capstone projects, such as academic journal articles, reports, book chapters, etc.

COURSE EVALUATION

1. Completion of CITI training and certification	5%	
2. Summary and critique of a sample Capstone project	10%	
3. Draft introduction and literature review	15%	} 85%
4. Draft research design	15%	
5. Final Capstone presentation	20%	
6. Final Capstone paper	35%	

1) CITI training and certification (5%)

Deadline: 23-Jan-2018

Each student is required to complete the CITI course, obtaining the CITI certificate and submit the 2-page pdf CITI certificate prior to starting working on their Capstone project.

- Students must visit <https://orra.rutgers.edu/citi> and register with the site, then students should select the "CITI Human Subject Protections Basic Course" and "Social / Behavioral / Epidemiologic Research Investigators, Study Staff, or Students" when prompted to choose a specific training course.
- Frequently Asked Questions are answered at the Rutgers' Office of Research Regulatory Affairs at <https://orra.rutgers.edu/citifaq>.
- The CITI certificate needs to be submitted via Blackboard

2) Summary and critique of a sample Capstone project (10%)

Deadline: 30-Jan-2018

Each student will select one capstone paper from a group of sample capstone projects provided by the instructor, and then prepare a summary AND a critique of this selected capstone paper. The completed 2-3 page "summary and critique" should be in an essay form and should include the following:

- (1) Name of Capstone Paper reviewed, author's name.
- (2) Identify the problem that serves as the basis for the capstone paper.
- (3) What is the overall research method utilized in the paper? (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, mixed, etc.)
- (4) What is the unit of analysis?
- (5) What type of data is collected?
- (6) What are the tools of data collection used? (e.g., surveys, document reviews, etc.)
- (7) What analytical tools or methods are employed?
- (8) What are the findings and recommendations?
- (9) Do the recommendations inform our understanding of the problem?
- (10) Suggest improvements (or alternative designs) that could be made to the design, given the stated problem.

3-6) Capstone project (85%)

Throughout the course, some of the Capstone project's components will be treated as individual assignments to ensure that students are making adequate progress towards the final Capstone paper. After students submit these drafts, the instructor will return the documents with feedback, suggestions, and comments for improvement as reflected in the final versions of these individual assignments. As more information is provided to the instructor, more feedback and guidance can be provided to the student.

Capstone topic proposal (ungraded)

Deadline: 30-Jan-2018

Early in the semester, students will submit a 1-2-page summary of their proposed Capstone topic. This proposal will include a summary of information on the organization and/or policy; issue, problem, or topic to be addressed; potential research question(s); and any other information which is available at that time (such as data sources, analysis methods, etc.).

3) Draft introduction and literature review (assignment #3)

Deadline: 27-Feb-2018

In this 6-10-page assignment, you should provide following information in two sections:

- (1) "Introduction" section:
 - a. Discuss the organization's or policy's background, historical context, and broader environment in which the problem, issue, or topic has developed;
 - b. Identify the specific problem or issue to be addressed by your capstone research.
- (2) "Literature Review" section:
 - a. Sources: academic journal articles, news reports, government documents, policies, books, etc.

- b. How the key concepts/terms/variables are defined and measured in the literature you reviewed;
- c. Methodological issues in the references that you cite, such as:
 - i. Approach: quantitative, qualitative, etc.;
 - ii. Data collection: survey, interview, etc.;
 - iii. Analytical method: quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis, etc.;
- d. Important findings that are related to your capstone topic.

4) Draft research design (assignment #4)

Deadline: 20-Mar-2018

In this 3-5-page assignment, you should provide following information:

- (1) Your research problem/issue and specific questions: that might include definition of concepts, and measurement of variables;
- (2) Where would you go to collect data information;
- (3) The overall research method you would utilize: quantitative, qualitative, mixed;
- (4) The unit of analysis: individual, program, department, organization, etc.;
- (5) What type of data would be collected: original data by survey or interview, secondary data from existing survey or from document review, etc.;
- (6) The tools of data collection: interview, focus group, survey, secondary, etc.;
- (7) Analytic tools or methods: comparative analysis, descriptive analysis, regression analysis, etc.;
- (8) What do you expect to find out (your hypotheses);
- (9) Any potential ethical issues, including human subjects issues.
- (10) Most importantly, use the diagnostic chart to determine whether you need to submit IRB review request.

5) Final Capstone presentation (assignment #5)

Deadline: 17-Apr-2018

Students will prepare a 10-minute Power-Point presentation, which briefly covers all aspects of the Capstone project report, but with emphasis on results, findings, and recommendations.

Students will need submit their presentations prior to class (i.e., 6pm EST) via Blackboard.

6) Final Capstone paper (assignment #6)

Deadline: 17-Apr-2018

Each student will prepare a 25-35-page report that analyzes a problem, issue, or topic confronted in a professional public or nonprofit setting. In order to assure that each student has sufficient background knowledge of the issue and/or organization necessary to complete the assignment, this paper may be directly related to your professional employment, internship, or negotiated as an approved consultancy with a local organization.

The paper must demonstrate the application of frameworks, theories, and concepts acquired through the MPA curriculum, as well as the skills and capacities developed during the program.

This Capstone Project may take several forms, such as

- Program Evaluation,
- Case Study,

- Policy Assessment,
- Research Paper.

Students must undertake the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval process if their Capstone project includes human subjects, such as interactions during interviews, observation, or surveys.

If a student's project includes any of these components, that student MUST make an appointment with the instructor early in the semester in order to ensure that all documents are completed and submitted correctly to the IRB for approval.

The components of the final capstone paper should include:

- 1) Executive Summary
 - Overview of the organization and/or policy, the problem/issue/topic, and why it is important; analytical framework and literature upon which the project relies; and research project itself and how it will be presented in the paper;
- 2) Introduction/Organizational Background and/or Identification of the issue;
 - Discussion of the organization's or policy's background, historical context, and broader environment in which the problem, issue, or topic has developed;
 - Identification of the specific problem or issue to be addressed by the research;
- 3) Literature Review
 - Identification and review of previous literature, relevant frameworks and theories which support this research, and best practices which have been used to address similar problems or conduct similar research;
- 4) Research Design and Methods
 - Information on the specific framework or model, research question (and hypotheses, if appropriate), variables and their operationalization, data collection techniques, and data analysis methods utilized in the assignment;
 - The selection of variables, operationalization, data sources, and data analysis methods should be supported by previous research and literature from the field;
- 5) Analysis and Results
 - Presentation of the data analysis and evaluation of results
 - May include tables, charts, and diagrams as needed
- 6) Recommendations
 - Explanation of a specific organizational, program, or policy action plan developed from and supported by the results and analysis of the research
 - These recommendations should be supported by the research analysis and results, as well as previous studies, literature from the field, and best practices
- 7) Conclusions
 - A summary of each major component of the Capstone project paper, including recommendations
- 8) Reference List/Bibliography
 - Alphabetical order by author's last name
- 9) Appendices or Exhibits (as needed)
 - For example, interview protocols or survey questionnaires

Formatting requirements for the Capstone paper:

- The Capstone paper should be neither significantly shorter, not significantly longer than **25-35 pages**.
- Double-spaced, single-sided printing;
- Standard 12-point font (e.g., Times New Roman or Calibri);
- 1-inch margins on all sides;
- Numbered pages;
- Headings: name, date, title of assignment, and course title and section number.
- Citation rules:
 - **All non-original work MUST be cited, in text and at the end of the document, in APA format**, including both published and unpublished sources.
 - APA citation formatting help can be found at Purdue University Online Writing Lab: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>.
 - **In order to avoid plagiarism, other people's words MUST be quoted and cited, and other people's ideas must be cited.**
 - For an overview avoiding plagiarism, please visit the Purdue University Online Writing Lab: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>.
- Sources of information
 - Well-regarded and reliable sources of information and data can be found in peer-reviewed journals, textbooks, government studies, and reports from non-partisan research centers, institutes, and laboratories.
 - Do not cite or depend upon Wikipedia, blogs, online encyclopedia or dictionaries, or other unreliable sources.
 - Certain magazines or news outlets (such as Time Magazine, The Economist, The Guardian, Scientific American, The New York Times, etc.) may also offer useful material, but these sources should be used rarely and only in conjunction with or as supported by scholarly, empirical, or primary sources.
- If you have any questions regarding the appropriateness of a specific source, please ask the instructor.

GRADING POLIY

A	90-100	B	80-84	C	70-74
B+	85-89	C+	75-79	F	Below 70

COURSE POLICIES

The **syllabus** serves as a general outline. I reserve the right to deviate from any part of the plan as necessary. Students will be notified of any such modifications.

Except for significant intervening circumstances (e.g., medical emergencies or death in the family), **late assignments** will be downgraded (10% for the first day, and 5% for every following day), and I will not adjust deadlines for individuals.

If students have a **grade dispute**, they should submit a one-page memo presenting evidence for their case within 10 business days of receipt of the grade. Based on the memo, the original assignment will be reconsidered.

In order to get the most out of the class for everybody, please **turn off your cellphone** – or silence the ringer – during class. Text messaging, emailing, and surfing the web is prohibited during class.

If you think you need help with your writing, talk to the professor. There are resources on campus to help you. Also feel free to contact SPAA's writing coach, Terry Hall, at tlh135@scarletmail.rutgers.edu.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

Students must follow the school's integrity policy: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>. Please be aware that plagiarism and any forms of cheating will never be excused under any circumstances – **I will check each assignment carefully using plagiarism detection software**. Violation of these policies leads to immediate failure of the course.

DISABILITY SERVICES

Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS). Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS. Accommodations are not provided retroactively, so please provide them as early as possible. For further information, please consult <https://ods.rutgers.edu>.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Session 1: 16 January 2018

Introduction and Capstone overview

Please bring a printed hard copy of the syllabus to class.

Read chapters 1, 2 and 5.

Session 2: 23 January 2018

Problem statement and research questions

Read chapters 3, 4.

Completion of CITI certificate is due (assignment #1).

Session 3: 30 January 2018	Literature review and theory
<i>Read chapter 6.</i>	
<i>Critique of sample capstone paper is due (assignment #2).</i>	
<i>Proposed Capstone topic is due (ungraded).</i>	
Session 4: 06 February 2018	Secondary data and research methods
<i>Read chapters 7, 8, 11-13.</i>	
Session 5: 13 February 2018	Analyzing data
<i>Read chapters 14-15.</i>	
Session 6: 20 February 2018	Review Session
Session 7: 27 February 2018	IRB requirements & submissions
<i>Introduction and literature review is due (assignment #3).</i>	
Session 8: 06 March 2018	Preparing Capstone reports and presentations
<i>IRB submissions (exempt category) are due by end of the week (ungraded).</i>	
Session 9: 13 March 2018	No class (Spring Recess)
Session 10: 20 March 2018	Review Session
<i>Research design is due (assignment #4).</i>	
Session 11: 27 March 2018	Review Session
Session 12: 03 April 2018	Review Session
Session 13: 10 April 2018	Review Session
Session 14: 17 April 2018	Capstone Presentations
<i>Final Capstone presentations are due (assignment #5).</i>	
<i>Final Capstone papers are due (assignment #6).</i>	
Session 14: 24 April 2018	Capstone Presentations