Capstone Project Seminar
PBPOL 608 F– Winter & Spring 2019
Tuesdays, 5:30 to 8:20 PM
Condon Hall 141

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Overview

The goal of this seminar is to help you complete a research project that satisfies degree project requirements and meets the needs of a client. This seminar and project will also help prepare you to conduct projects during your professional career. In a structured format, the seminar works through the stages of developing and executing such a project, while letting you to learn from each other, from the literature on research methods, and from the instructor's experience. Students will complete projects that span a variety of topics and methods, in areas that include policy analysis, program design, management, evaluation, and engagement. Assignments will keep you on pace to complete the final report by the end of the spring quarter. Upon successful completion, you will have learned to:

- Develop a research question that is feasible to investigate over two quarters and produce answers and recommendations that your client will find valuable.
- Design a research project that gathers relevant data and uses appropriate methodologies to answer the research question.
- Work with a client to manage and meet expectations.
- Prepare a written report that clearly presents your research, findings, and recommendations.
- Prepare and deliver a concise and engaging presentation of your findings.

Expectations

Reading and written assignments must be completed prior to the class sessions in which they are noted below. You will regularly present your work in progress to the class, and offer constructive comments on others' work, both in class and electronically. In addition, we will explore issues related to applied research through discussions of the assigned reading and possible presentations by invited guests.

The structure of the seminar will vary widely from week to week. Most weeks during the winter quarter we will meet as one group. These sessions will provide opportunities to work together as you craft your research question, negotiate the terms of your relationship with your client, select your research methods, gather and analyze data, and begin your written report. You should use these opportunities to try things out and think creatively and ambitiously. Unlike some classes, there are no wrong answers in this class; there are only more or less useful and feasible research questions, more or less rigorous research methods, and more or less comprehensible and compelling written products and presentations. The goal of these class sessions is to create a safe environment in which you can discuss your progress and

receive feedback from your classmates and me so that you can refine and improve your work. I will create a supportive environment in which each of you feel comfortable discussing your work and receiving constructive feedback. In exchange, I expect that you come to each seminar prepared to discuss your ideas and progress, and constructively and respectfully critique others' ideas and progress. During weeks when we do not meet, which will mostly be during the spring quarter, you will be expected to work on your research or meet with your client, fellow students, or me. ***These weeks are not breaks***. They are a time when you are expected to move your project forward.

Please keep in mind that you are undertaking a very large project, with the vast majority of the work occurring outside the classroom. One of your most important tasks is to decide how to manage this time so that you deliver your client an outstanding product at the beginning of June. You will put together a schedule and work plan, and your classmates and I will do our best to help you stay on that track. But it is your responsibility to decide how best to spend your time and ensure you are making adequate progress.

THE SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO REVISIONS

This syllabus is not a contract. It is subject to revisions as needed to improve the seminar content and to change assignments and due dates as the instructor deems appropriate.

BOOKS ON RESEARCH METHODS

This text gives guidance on how to develop high-quality research projects and is a resource for teams as they design and implement their capstone-related research.

> Johnson, G. (2015). Research methods for public administrators. New York: Routledge.

Best of all: This text is available for download through UW Libraries. We will only be reading selected chapters, but I suggest you download the entire book and use it as a resources throughout the capstone research process.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADES

You will be graded on a 4.0 scale. Please see the "Evans School Guidelines for Course Grades" in the MPA student handbook for more information. Your course grade will be based on the following components:

Capstone Project Degree Paper: 80%

Evaluation of Capstone Project (CP) paper is based on overall quality, analytical rigor, value for the client, and quality of presentation(s).

Seminar Participation: 10%

This component includes:
- Turning in all intermediate assignments (e.g., letter of agreement, work plan, research question and methodology note, draft outline) on time and ensuring they are of superior quality.
- Students working in teams are expected to contribute equitably to the collective output. You will

be asked to complete a confidential individual peer evaluation at the end of Winter quarter, and again at the end of the Capstone Seminar. Grades will be adjusted in cases of unbalanced contributions.

Peer Review: 10%

- You will be assigned to review the work products of one other group. You are expected to contribute to the success of your peers. As such, your feedback is expected to be thoughtful, thorough, and timely. See APPENDIX for Peer Review Assignments.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION NORMS

As you participate in class, please keep in mind these Evans School norms. As a professional school, we have a responsibility to communicate with each other – inside and outside of the classroom – in a manner consistent with conduct in today's increasingly diverse places of work. We hold ourselves individually and collectively responsible for our communication by:

- listening carefully and respectfully;

- sharing and teaching each other generously;

- clarifying the intent and impact of our comments;

- giving and receiving feedback in a "relationship building" manner; and

- working together to expand our knowledge by using high standards for evidence and analysis.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

As a student in this course, you acknowledge that you are a member of a learning community in the Evans School of Public Policy & Governance that is committed to the highest academic standards. As a member of this community, you agree to uphold the fundamental standards of honesty, respect and integrity, and you accept the responsibility to encourage others to adhere to these standards. If you are uncertain about whether a particular action constitutes academic misconduct, please ask me for guidance *before* an assignment is due or see the UW's guidance on what constitutes academic misconduct at: depts.washington.edu/grading/pdf/AcademicResponsibility.pdf.

ONLINE RESOURCES

The Evans School has assembled some materials that you should review as you develop and complete your research:
- Capstone Project website: http://evans.uw.edu/myevans/students/capstone-projects-overview.
- Student Consulting Lab website: http://evans.uw.edu/myevans/students/public-service-clinics

- For applied research methods, literature reviews, and high performing teams, see: http://evans.uw.edu/myevans/students/research-writing-and-team-resources
- Capstone projects archive: http://evans.uw.edu/myevans/students/capstone-project-archive

THE FINAL REPORT

A complete five-chapter report is likely to contain most of the following elements. Exact content will vary based on the topic and type of project.

Cover page, executive summary, and table of contents

Chapter 1:   Introduction (with topic, client's objective, research question, and key findings)

Chapter 2:   Diagnosis of the problem, key factors (explanatory variables), and supporting literature

Chapter 3:   Research methods

Chapter 4:   Analysis, findings, alternatives and trade-offs (if appropriate)

Chapter 5:   Recommendations, expected consequences of implementing the recommendations, and evaluation plan during and/or after implementation (if appropriate)

References section and appendices

HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

If your project involves the collection of data about living individuals using surveys, interviews, observation, administrative data, or private information **and** you plan to share your findings beyond the Evans School or your client organization (as in a journal article), you **must** obtain Human Subjects approval prior to the collection of data. It cannot be done retroactively. If your project will be submitted only to the Evans School and your client organization (and the individuals studied are employees, clients, or other members of that organization), then you do not need to go through the Human Subjects review process.

*** WINTER QUARTER SCHEDULE ***

Week 1 – Tuesday, January 8 – First Class

Project Design, Team Building, and Expectations

Read before class:
- The course syllabus
- Review all links on the "Proposal to Presentation" web site
- Chapter 1 (Introduction), Chapter 2 (Basic research concepts), and Chapter 3 (What is the question?) from Johnson's (2015) *Research Methods for Public Administrators* (via UW Libraries)
- Chapter 17 (Communicating research results) and Chapter 18 (Conclusion: Research at the intersection of politics and administration) from Johnson's (2015) *Research Methods for Public Administrators*

Class discussion: Getting started on your project, including communicating with your client, scoping the project and research question, and possible research methods.

Week 2 – Tuesday, January 15

5:30 – 630 Librarian Guidance on Information Sources, Research Design

Meet in Condon 141 for presentation by UW Public Affairs Librarian Emily Keller.

Read before class:
- "Literature Review."
- "How to Prepare an Annotated Bibliography."

6:45 to 8:00 pm -- From Problem Solving to Solution Design
Guest Speakers: J. Eduardo Campos and Erica W Campos, Authors, Founder Embedded Knowledge Inc.
https://www.linkedin.com/in/j-eduardocampos/ and https://www.linkedin.com/in/ericawcampos/

Products due (one per team, posted on Canvas no later 5pm on January 22):
- Letter of Agreement, signed by your team, client, and me
    - NOTE: Teams that met with their clients in December will have already uploaded their LoA. This is for teams meeting with their clients the first week of January.
- Draft research question

Groups will use this time to meet with clients and/or finish your Letters of Agreement.

Week 3 – Tuesday, January 22 (No Class)

- Students work on their projects

Products due (one per team, posted on Canvas no later 5pm on January 22):
- Letter of Agreement, signed by your team, client, and me

- o NOTE: Teams that met with their clients in December will have already uploaded their LoA. This is for teams meeting with their clients the first week of January.
- Draft research question

What Do Good Capstone Projects Look Like?

Readings:
- Two award-winning capstone projects of your choice. (To find them, visit the page that lists the winners for the Narver, Pealey, and Public Service Clinics prizes. Then go to the archive to review two projects that won one of those three prizes.) As you read, develop a set of criteria for what makes a good degree project, including what makes it useful for a client.

Products due (posted on Canvas no later than 5pm on January 29):
- One page Project Statement or introductory summary with research questions (which becomes Chapter 1 of the Capstone) submitted by team lead.
- Work plan with timeline through May (one per team). Samples available at http://evans.uw.edu/myevans/students/proposal-to-presentation.

Class discussion: What you learned from reading past Capstone projects, including:

- What makes a CP paper remarkable, and useful to the client?
- How is the research organized?
- How is a research question clearly articulated?
- How is methodology consistent with the question(s) being addressed?
- How does the paper "wrap up" in the conclusions section – i.e., goes back to the research question and explains how the research addressed it?

Class will review, and give feedback on, each group's draft research question and work plan.

Review of Basic Research Methods
Read before class:
- "Real World Research," by Colin Robinson, available under "Research Strategies" at http://evans.uw.edu/myevans/students/research-writing-and-team-resources

Products due (posted on Canvas no later than 5pm on February 5):
- One page Literature Review summary (which becomes Chapter 2 of the Capstone)

Class discussion (please review Chapters 4-16 from Johnson's (2015) *Research Methods* as needed):
1. What are the pros and cons of various research methods? What evidence you might gather for your own project? How you might analyze that evidence?

2. What are you learning from your literature review? How is this knowledge influencing your research design and methods?

Teams will meet individually with Akhtar. Times to be assigned, but they will all be between 5:30-8:20pm.

Designing Interview and Survey Questions

Read before class:
- [Basic guidance for survey design](#).
- Beth L. Leech (2002). "Asking Questions: Techniques for Semi-structured Interviews," *Political Science and Politics,* 35(04), pp 665-668.
- Dillman, D. A. (2008). "The Logic and Psychology of Constructing Questionnaires." In E. D. De Leeuw, J. J. Hox, & D. A. Dillman (ed.), *International Handbook of Survey Methodology* (pp. 161-175). New York: Erlbaum.

Optional readings to further enhance your skills:
- Fowler, J., F. J., & Cosenza, C. (2008). "Writing Effective Questions." In E. D. De Leeuw, J. J. Hox, & D. A. Dillman (ed.), *International Handbook of Survey Methodology* (pp. 136-160). New York: Erlbaum.
- Jon Krosnick and Stanley Presser (2009). "Question and Questionnaire Design." In *Handbook of Survey Research*, Second Edition.

Products due (posted to Canvas no later than 5PM February 19):
- One page Research Methods summary (which becomes Chapter 3 of the Capstone)
- Memo with draft survey and/or interview questions, along with the population of individuals from which you will sample
- First draft of annotated bibliography ("Annotation" means a short paragraph after each bibliographic entry that specifies the content and usefulness of the source for your project)

Class discussion: Interview methods and survey designs; each group will give a progress update

Product due (posted on Canvas no later than 5pm on February 26):
- Drafts of Chapter 1, Chapter 2, and Chapter 3, uploaded to Canvas and circulated to other teams for their review, comments, and editing
- Feedback due to groups no later than 5pm on Monday, February 25.

Products due (posted on Canvas no later than 5pm on March 5):
- Detailed workplan for spring quarter

Class discussion: Progress report presentations (10-15 minutes per group; if using slides, upload to Canvas no later than <u>EOD on March 4</u>)

Week 10 – Tuesday, March 12

Products due:
- Draft of Chapter 4, uploaded to Canvas and circulated to other teams for their review, comments, and editing

*** SPRING QUARTER SCHEDULE ***   Subject to Change

Week 1 – Tuesday, April 2

Products due:
- Revised workplan for spring quarter (if necessary)
- Feedback to teams on their drafts of Chapter 4

In-class presentations on progress, challenges, etc. (10-15 min per group)

Week 2 – Tuesday, April 9– No Class; Meet with Akhtar as Needed

Week 3 – Tuesday, April 16 – No Class; Meet with Akhtar as Needed

Week 4 – Tuesday, April 23 – No Class; Meet with Akhtar as Needed

Products due:
- First draft of entire capstone, uploaded to Canvas, circulated to peer reviewers, and ***forwarded to client for review/comments***

Week 5 – Tuesday, April 30 – No Class; Meet with Akhtar as Needed

Products due:
- First draft of project poster, uploaded to Canvas and circulated to peer reviewers for feedback
- Feedback to teams on their first draft of entire capstone

Week 6 – Tuesday, May 7 – No Class; Meet with Akhtar as Needed

Products due:
- Second draft of entire capstone, uploaded to Canvas and circulated to peer reviewers for feedback

Week 7 – Tuesday, May 14

Products due:
- Final draft of project poster, uploaded to Canvas
- Feedback to teams on their second draft of entire capstone

Class discussion: In class practice presentations

Week 8 – Tuesday, May 21 – No Class; Meet with Akhtar as Needed

Products due:
- Final draft of entire capstone, uploaded to Canvas and forwarded to client

Videos (please watch all of them *before and after* making your slides for Week 9's presentations):

- "Avoid Death by PowerPoint," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOrHxRB3JrQ.
- "Presentations: Good/Bad Examples," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5c1susCPAE.
- "Killer Presentation Skills," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whTwjG4ZIJg.

Week 9 – Tuesday, May 28

Products due:
- In class presentations

Week 10 – Tuesday, June 4 – No Class

Products due:
- Final capstone submitted on Canvas by 5pm.

PROJECT GROUPS

CLIENT	TEAM MEMBERS

PEER REVIEW ASSIGNMENTS

NAME	ASSIGNED GROUP