

Capstone Seminars

Spring 2018

The intent of the capstone seminars is to provide students with a focused experience in working on a real world problem of policy and management in a team setting under expert faculty guidance. Each seminar is focused on a prescriptive question - what should a specified public official or institution do about a specified problem?

Capstone Seminar: Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism

Prof. Michael Kenney

Tuesday 12:00-2:50p

This research-oriented capstone course will provide students the opportunity to apply what they have learned at GSPIA to deepen their understanding of terrorism and counter-terrorism. As a capstone seminar, students will work individually and in groups on a specific project they choose on terrorism and/or counter-terrorism.

The purpose of this capstone seminar is to give you a focused experience in working on a real world policy question: what should we do about terrorism, both in the United States and internationally? You will explore aspects of this larger puzzle that relate directly to your own interests. By the end of the semester you will have a greater understanding of the broad and complex nature of terrorism, much of which will come from learning about your colleagues' capstone projects, while also developing your own expertise on a specific policy-relevant question of interest to you.

This capstone course is built around students' research interests. We will spend the semester exploring topics in terrorism and counter-terrorism that interest you and your colleagues, topics that you are willing to investigate further through your own research. Working in small groups, students will make an oral presentation to the class at some point in the semester. They will also complete a written project related to their research.

Capstone Seminar: The Future of Economic Regionalism

Prof. Martin Staniland

Monday 12:00-2:50p

This capstone will examine the political and economic rationale for the creation of the multiple schemes for regional economic integration and free trade areas proposed in the last 70 years. Many such schemes exist only on paper and those still moving ahead are at very different levels of development, with the European Union (EU) being the most advanced in degree of integration and institutionalization. But the EU itself has recently suffered two major crises that have raised fundamental questions about the benefits, risks and potential of regional economic integration as a strategy.

The course will focus on some of the following basic questions:

- What is "regional economic integration"?
- What are the most common arguments for and against economic regionalism?
- What are the main differences between regional and other multilateral economic institutions?
- What are the main forms of regional economic integration? How does terminology distinguish them?
- How do regional economic integration schemes differ from other forms of liberalization?
- What should policy-makers involved in other projects for regional integration learn, if anything, from the recent Eurozone crisis about the value and practical feasibility of this idea?
- Does regional integration make sense in a supposedly "globalized" economy?

Assignments:

Students will be required to complete the following assignments satisfactorily:

1. Reading and commenting on selected chapters and articles in the study guide for course;
2. Identifying current issues related to economic regionalism in the media;

3. Researching and writing a research paper of no more than 25 pages on an approved topic concerning economic regionalism in general or particular schemes for economic integration;
4. Taking a final exam on April 23rd consisting of three essays in response to questions chosen by lot from a set of six to be distributed on April 2nd.

Grading: The final grade will be constituted as follows: 60% for the research paper; 30% for the final exam and 10% for class contributions.

Class meetings and topics: (tentative)

Week 1 (January 8th): Theories and concepts of regional economic integration

[(January 15th) (Martin Luther King Day– no class)]

Week 2: (January 22nd) The European Union as paradigm of economic integration?

Week 3: (January 29th) The United States and economic regionalism

Week 4: (February 5th) Creating a single market

Week 5: (February 12th) Regional integration and developing countries: the Western Hemisphere

Week 6: (February 19th) Regional integration and developing countries: Asia

Week 7:(February 26th) The EU and the financial crisis of 2008-2011

Weeks 8-13: (March [5th spring break - no class], 12th, 19th, 26th; April 2nd, 9th and 16th) - Research, writing and presentations

Week 14: (April 23rd) Final exam

Capstone Seminar: Nonprofit Clinic

Prof. Kevin Kearns

Monday 3:00-5:50p

The Nonprofit Clinic is a capstone seminar that gives you the opportunity to serve as a management consultant to a nonprofit organization in the Pittsburgh region. You will work in teams of two (2) people to provide professional-quality consultation to your nonprofit client, helping the client address issues related to strategic planning, market research, personnel management, fund raising, governance, leadership, and general management. In addition, you will learn about the consulting profession and you will practice many of the diagnostic, analytical, and interpersonal skills that are essential in a professional work environment.

The Nonprofit Clinic has served over 60 organizations in the past five years. Your predecessors in this course have set a high standard of quality work and professionalism. While there are no prerequisites for this course, you will be quite challenged if you lack skills in problem diagnosis, organizational management and strategy, written and verbal communication, and team work.

At the end of this Capstone course you should be able to:

- Work with a nonprofit client to help them diagnose and define problems of management capacity building;

- Apply your skills in quantitative and qualitative analysis, organizational design, problem solving, team building, program evaluation, strategic thinking, and leadership to real organizational problems and opportunities;
- Design and manage a complex consulting project from beginning to end including: communication with the client, specification of products, terms of engagement, task and activity planning, project management, professional writing, and presentation skills;
- Practice skills in professional interaction, including professional etiquette, negotiation, conflict management, problem-solving and communication skills;
- Address professionally the unexpected issues that will arise in a consulting project;
- Build and sustain an effective team of professionals who will be engaged and mutually committed to delivering a professional-quality product to the client.

Capstone Seminar: Program/Project Design and Evaluation: Workshop on Development

Prof. Müge Finkel

Friday 9:00-11:50a

The skills-based capstone course on Project Design is for students interested in working in international and local organizations, and who would like pursue careers in policy and program work in international and community development, human security and related areas. Students in this capstone will learn to formulate project proposals that are economically, socially, politically and environmentally viable, using methods that are widely practiced in major development agencies. We will teach and practice the foundations of project design step by step: identification of the main problem to be addressed, planning the project implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and to the final stage assessing the program's effectiveness. As such, the course will provide a venue in which students will be asked to develop a project idea on the basis of real needs and required resources, and then transpose the idea into an implementation plan and budget.

We will conduct the course in a workshop manner, so its success will depend on effective participation. Students are encouraged to bring project ideas developed during internships or in other settings, and to participate actively both as part of a project/program team and as individuals. We will bring practicing experts from organizations such as USAID and the World Bank as well as experts from within the University, to share their program development and evaluation experiences in their respective organizations.

Capstone Seminar: Genocide Prevention and Response

Prof. Taylor Seybolt

Monday 3:00-5:50p

This seminar is concerned with stopping large-scale, systematic violence against civilians. Regular and irregular fighting forces commit atrocities against civilians with disturbing frequency, despite legal prohibitions and moral arguments against attacking non-combatants. The course is built around the proposition that genocidal acts are the result of processes of escalation that reach a threshold, beyond which a triggering event can turn normal violence into extreme violence. The first half of the course covers theories of the causes of genocide and mass atrocities, illustrated with cases from the early 1900s to the present. In the second half of the course, we evaluate efforts to prevent and respond to mass killing. In particular, we will look at early warning, planning and training programs put forward by various governmental and non-governmental bodies in the U.S. and at the UN

The course objectives are: (1) To become familiar with key concepts, issues and institutions in the field of mass atrocity prevention and response. (2) To understand the opportunities and constraints associated with planning and implementing prevention policies. (3) To carry out academic analysis of the processes that lead to extreme violence, with a focus on a

specific crisis. (4) To research, write and present an analytical study of the protection of civilians in situations of potential genocidal violence. Past seminars have produced individual research papers, a group research report on Cote d'Ivoire, submitted to the Center for Genocide Prevention at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, and a group analytical report on the state of knowledge about protection of civilians, submitted to the Stimson Center program on the Future of Peace Operations.

Capstone Seminar: Manchester Neighborhood in Pittsburgh and Route 65

Prof. Sabina Deitrick

Monday 9:00-11:50a

The purpose of this class project will be for the students to learn and implement the planning and governance processes as it relates to multi-modal planning in an urban environment. The project will determine the feasibility of eliminating a limited access highway and planning a multi-modal street grid system to replace the highway to spur economic development. The project will use case studies of other successful urban freeway demolitions and analyze the planning and local and state governance conditions that apply in the Route 65 case. As urban areas are revitalized it is recognized that these types of highways are a barrier to the revitalization of many areas because of the transportation impediment created, impact on neighborhoods and land use patterns, and disruption of vehicular, transit, pedestrian and bicycle networks.

Capstone Seminar: Evidence Based Journalism: The Impact of "Alternative-Facts" on Public Policy in a Rapidly Changing Media Landscape

Prof. Bill Dunn with Mila Sanina, Executive Director of Public Source

Monday 6:00-8:50p

The capstone will carry out a project in support of Public Source's (<http://publicsource.org/>) investigative journalism. The size of this capstone will be limited to 12 students with demonstrated commitments and requisite knowledge and skills to learn new techniques of meta-analysis, professional reporting, and writing.

The class will be co-taught by an experienced policy methodologist and an experienced journalist, with interaction among accomplished journalists and students who are skilled in qualitative and quantitative analysis. Together, we will address some of the most urgent policy problems facing the region and nation: water-borne and atmospheric lead, reduction of health care through cutbacks in the Affordable Care Act, public safety of bicycle lanes, carcinogenic properties of turf on athletic fields, the effectiveness of charter/public schools.

This is an active, high-energy research and public policy seminar with participation open to skilled students from all degree programs and majors.

Students will work with the two capstone faculty and reporters from Public Source, acquiring knowledge and skills in:

- Investigative reporting and writing
- Quantitative meta-analysis and realistic research review
- Meta-analysis software called *Distiller*
- Data archives including the Western Pennsylvania Data Center (<http://www.wprdc.org/>)
- Fact-checking diagnostics and data analysis
- Applied policy analysis and evaluation
- Interaction with professional journalists
- Understanding principles and practices of the new field of evidence-based journalism

Resources:

<http://www.evidence-based-journalism.de/en/home> https://storify.com/jayrosen_nyu/evidence-based-vs-accusation-driven-reporting <https://medium.com/@viewmagazine/is-evidence-based-journalism-on-the-wane-4f2a50bff68a>

M. Lipsey and D. Wilson, *Practical Meta-Analysis*. Sage, 2001.

C. Page et al. *Synthesizing Qualitative and Quantitative Health Evidence*. Open University

Capstone Seminar: Data Visualization for Public Policy in R

Prof. Sera Linardi

Thursday 12:00-2:50p

This is a skills-based capstone for students who have completed at least Quant I and would like learn to do data analysis in R while working with a nonprofit / governmental client. While STATA and other proprietary software are easy to learn, the open source R programming language is quickly becoming the leading language in data science and students are often finding R to be a prerequisite for analysis jobs.

In this capstone you will spend about 3-5 hours a week outside of class on hands-on programming assignments to perform basic data manipulation and visualization in R. The emphasis will be to build a portfolio that demonstrates your capabilities to future employers in analyzing and presenting data. Potential partners include the City of Pittsburgh Innovation and Performance Department and other local organizations.

Capstone Seminar: Policy and Planning in Developing Countries

Prof. Marcela González Rivas

Monday 12:00-2:50p

This capstone course will be coordinated with a capstone course taking place in the University of Andes in Bogotá, Colombia.

The core objective of this international capstone course is two-fold. The first is that the course gives students the experience of working on a "real life problem." Capstone courses give students the opportunity to apply their expertise and skills to addressing planning or policy problems, usually by working with a local organization, community organization or local government. This type of exercise is essential for students to translate the knowledge they have gained in their programs into practice. The second objective of the course is to explore the nexus between what happens at the local level and its pertinence globally. Therefore, in this Capstone course, students will work at the local level with Nine Mile Run Watershed Association (NMRWA), which is a small urban watershed located in Pittsburgh's East End. NMRWA works on restoring and protecting its watershed ecosystem, while working regionally to support and implement solutions for an overall healthy urban environment.

Following the second objective, students in this capstone course will exchange ideas and information with the group of students in Colombia, who will be working with a local municipality near Bogotá, addressing environmental health challenges at the local level. In this sense, students enrolled in both capstones will be engaged locally on questions that are relevant elsewhere. The Colombian students will visit Pittsburgh in the Fall, to allow both groups of students to exchange their experiences working at the local level on related issues. In this sense, both groups of students will be working at the local level on issues that are relevant elsewhere in the world fostering the exchange of ideas and knowledge.

Context

NMRWA is responsible for the stewardship of the NMR Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration, which was completed in 2006. This includes activities in the upper watershed to improve water quality in NMR. Multi-municipal coordination is critical for any watershed organization, as the movement of water doesn't terminate at political boundaries. NMRWA has established programs and partnerships to remove pollutants, retain rainwater runoff, and engage residents with the goal of improving water quality in the stream. These efforts contribute to create an urban watershed ecosystem that helps address related community goals, such as job training, neighborhood revitalization, reduced flooding and basement backups, increased social equity, reduced heat island effects, enhanced community health, and home equity building. To provide support to the collaborative approach of NMRWA and its collective communities and neighborhoods, the Capstone course will offer a holistic, resilient, and sustainable assessment of possible solutions to the issues faced by their watershed.

Students in Colombia will be looking at the implications for Villapinzón's local government of a 2014 decree that established that by 2044 the Bogotá River must be free of pollutants, with short term implications. The Bogotá river starts in the Villapinzón municipality, and municipal officials are struggling with how to achieve this goal. The decree establishes general policy guidelines related to water and sanitation for local governments to follow, in order to restore the environment of the river. But the decision poses major challenges for local governments, since it implies not only the responsibility to achieve the goal but also to do so with little prior relevant knowledge. Therefore, students will continue working with the local government of Villapinzón to help the municipality comply with the decree and the short term goals.

More information on the course

Students interested in taking this course need to contact Prof. González Rivas mag231@pitt.edu; write in the email subject: "Capstone question".