

PAF 9190: Capstone Seminar

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Official Course Description

This course is an advanced seminar in which students in their last semester before graduation produce a semester project drawing from the full course of study toward the Master of Public Administration (MPA). The project may involve policy research, intensive study of an organization, development of a rationale for new or changed service programs, or some combination of these. Special attention is placed on incorporating knowledge from the core MPA curriculum.

The single product of this course is your **capstone thesis**: a professional work of public affairs analysis, 25–40 pages long, that identifies a public problem, documents it with evidence, and recommends a specific course of action.

Course Modality

Of the fourteen sessions, **seven meet in person** and **seven run online and asynchronously**. “Asynchronous” means there is no meeting and nothing to log in to at a set time. Every date is fixed in the schedule the students receive.

1. **Plan to attend all seven in-person sessions.**
2. **I do not normally record in-person sessions.**
3. **Do asynchronous work on your own schedule**, by the posted deadline.
4. **Find all course material on the course website**: the readings, agendas, assignment folders, your peer group’s folder, and grades.

Course Organization

You build the capstone thesis in eleven numbered steps, Step 0 through Step 10. Steps 0 through 8 each produce a section of the final document; Step 9 is the final presentation and Step 10 is the finished thesis. *Elements of a Capstone Thesis*, by Thomas J. Main (Main, nda), is the craft manual for those sections: what each section must contain and how to write it. Main’s manual is numbered by element, 1 through 11, with five appendices of model sections, and every step below names the section of the manual that teaches that step. The steps and the elements are two different lists. Several steps feed a single element, and the last two steps are not elements at all.

Budget 5–6 hours a week for this course, on top of the seven in-person sessions.

Part I (Sessions 1–4): The question, the network, and the sources

You arrive with a topic and leave Part I with a research question, a mapped policy network, an annotated bibliography, and a method for reading other people's evidence. All four sessions in Part I meet in person.

Part II (Sessions 5–12): Evidence, and the draft

Eight sessions, seven of them asynchronous. Six sessions add a graded round of peer responses to that session's assignment; Part II ends with a complete rough draft.

Part III (Sessions 13–14): Presenting

Two in-person sessions of live presentations; half the class presents at each session. The final capstone is then due on the last day of finals week.

Course Learning Goals

The five goals below belong to the Marxé MPA program as a whole, and the capstone is where you demonstrate each of them.

1. **Management.** Analyze how the organization you are studying is designed, run, and governed, using more than one management or leadership frame, and recommend changes that would improve the organization.
2. **Policy.** Identify alternative policy options, assess their feasibility and effectiveness, and say how the one you recommend is expected to change outcomes.
3. **Critical thinking.** Use social science methods — interviews, site visits, document review, and quantitative analysis — to draw valid conclusions from evidence, including the evidence other people offer for their own causal claims.
4. **Public service perspectives.** Show what the public interest is in the question you ask and in the recommendation you make.
5. **Communication.** Present findings, analysis, and recommendations persuasively in writing and out loud, and name the strengths and weaknesses of your writing and of your speaking.

Course Assignments

The capstone thesis

One document, 25–40 pages, built one section at a time. Each step names the section of *Elements of a Capstone Thesis* that teaches that step. Each step is due on the date of the session where it appears, at the time given under Submission and Format. An **annotated bibliography** lists each source in full and follows it with a short paragraph on what that source argues and how you will use it in your thesis.

- **Step 0, topic statement** — due before Session 1; 1/2–1 page; becomes the seed of your Introduction; Main §3.1.
 - Post it to the course website before the first class.
 - Name *one* institution and *one* policy.
- **Step 1, problem statement** — due at Session 2; 2 pages; becomes your Introduction; Main §3.
- **Step 2, network map and outreach plan** — due at Session 3; 2 pages plus a table; becomes part of your Introduction and Methodology; Main §3.1.3.
 - Send at least two outreach emails before you submit Step 2, and report the status of each.
- **Step 3, annotated working bibliography** — due at Session 4; 10–12 sources; becomes your Literature Review and Bibliography; Main §§4, 10–11.
- **Step 4, literature review draft** — due at Session 6; 4–6 pages; becomes your Literature Review; Main §4 and Appendix 5.
- **Step 5, agency history and current status** — due at Session 8; 3–4 pages; becomes your History and Current Status; Main §5.
 - The History and Current Status element covers the legislation that created and mandates your agency or policy, the regulations and court decisions that govern how it operates, the political developments that shaped it, and its recent budget and caseload figures.
 - The purpose of that element is to set out the constraints your agency or policy operates under, most of which can be changed only marginally in the short run. Your Conclusion has to work inside them, or argue for loosening one and name who could do so.
- **Step 6, methodology plan and interview guide** — due at Session 9; 2 pages; becomes your Methodology; Main §6 and Appendices 1–2.
- **Step 7, evidence section draft** — due at Session 10; 5–7 pages; becomes your Evidence section; Main §7.
 - Submit the evidence section draft inside an assembled file: every section you have written so far, in order, under headings, with a table of contents.
 - Edit the earlier sections to ensure they fit together as one coherent document rather than a stack of separate drafts.
 - **Make sure your Introduction asks the question your evidence actually answers**, and revise the Introduction if it does not.
 - I grade Step 7 on the assembled whole, not on the evidence draft alone.
- **Step 8, rough draft** — due at Session 12; 25–35 pages; the whole thesis; Main §§1–2 and 8–11, and Appendices 3–4.

- Submit a **complete** document, Executive Summary and Table of Contents included.
- The rough draft is the only full-document feedback round in the course.
- **Step 9, final presentation** — at Session 13 or 14; 10 minutes; your last rehearsal of the argument before the final capstone.
- **Step 10, final capstone** — due the last day of finals week; 25–40 pages; Main §§1–11.

Elements of a Capstone Thesis sets the standard for the eleven elements. This course adds two requirements to that standard, and I grade the final capstone on both. Each requirement belongs in a different element, and both requirements apply only where they fit your project.

1. **Say who could have been in your evidence and is not.** *Elements of a Capstone Thesis* §6 asks you to describe what you did. This course also asks you to say who else could have answered your question, and why those people are not in your evidence.
 - If you interviewed anyone, your **Methodology** says how you chose whom to approach, and who declined or could not be reached.
 - Bleich and Pekkanen (2015), recommended at Session 9, gives a table built for exactly this reporting.
2. **Say what else could account for what you found.** For any finding you report, your **Qualifications** names the other explanations that would fit the same evidence. *Elements of a Capstone Thesis* §9.2 asks you to respond to the serious objections to your claim that you anticipate. “Something else could explain that” is one such objection, and here you raise it against yourself whether or not the objection occurred to you. Some examples, and what else could account for each:
 - **A count that rose or fell.** The thing being counted may have changed, or the way it is defined, counted, or reported may have changed.
 - **A pattern you saw in a handful of cases.** Those cases may be unusual, and you may have stopped looking before you found a case that did not fit the pattern.
 - **A reason you attribute to an institution.** Another motive may fit the same record, and an institution’s stated reason for a decision is not always its actual reason.
 - **An effect you attribute to a policy.** The places that got the policy may already have differed from the places that did not, and you may be seeing that difference rather than any effect of the policy.

Organizational diagnosis

The steps above assume the more common form of the capstone: You name one institution and one policy, and you analyze that policy. Some students write an **organizational diagnosis** instead: a study of the agency or division *where you work*, assessing its capacity to meet its own goals and ending in conclusions about how it could perform better. The organizational diagnosis is a fully acceptable form of the capstone.

Read “Organization Diagnosis: Guidelines” (Main, ndb) and its crosswalk to the eleven elements before Session 2, whichever path you expect to take. The Guidelines are a Marxé

course document, provided to this course by Prof. Main; the crosswalk is mine. You declare your path at Session 2, and the Guidelines are the only description of what an organizational diagnosis requires. The crosswalk maps the five sections of the Guidelines onto the eleven elements of *Elements of a Capstone Thesis*, and flags the elements the Guidelines never ask for. There is no approval process; declare the path so that my feedback fits. The eleven steps are the same either way. The only difference may be the literature review, which draws on organization and management theory rather than on evaluations of a policy. That theory supplies the frames you diagnose with, so the review comes earlier in the argument and carries more weight.

Training and consultation requirements

Two trainings and one consultation, each completed with an office outside this course. All three are credit/no-credit, and all three appear in the grade table. Upload each certificate or confirmation to the course website.

1. **Library guide and plagiarism tutorial** — due by Session 3; 1 point. Read the Newman Library's Marxie Capstone research guide (Newman Library, Baruch College, 2026), then complete its plagiarism tutorial (Newman Library, Baruch College, nd) and upload the certificate.
2. **CITI certificates, both modules** — due by Session 4; 3 points. CITI is the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative, which runs the research-ethics training CUNY uses. **This course requires both modules before you collect data from any person.** Log in with your CUNYfirst credentials. CITI renames its courses from time to time, so if either title below has changed, I give the current one at Session 1.
 - "HSR (Human Subjects Research) for Social & Behavioral Faculty, Graduate Students & Postdoctoral Scholars," social-behavioral track. Budget 3 to 4 hours.
 - "Responsible Conduct of Research — CUNY Researchers." Budget 1 to 2 hours.
3. **Schwartz Institute capstone consultation** — due by Session 10; 1 point. Book and attend one writing consultation. Booking details are under Writing Support, and the Marxie School describes the service on its [Writing for Public and International Affairs](#) page.

Peer groups and the seven rounds

At Session 1 I assign you by lottery to a **peer group**, fixed for the semester. Your group is who you owe work to in seven rounds across the semester, and the group has its own the course website folder. **Peer feedback is worth 3 points in total, divided across seven rounds**, and a missed response loses its share of those 3 points. I grade each response on whether it answers the three questions seriously and in good faith.

Every round works the same way.

1. Post the work due that session to your peer group's folder by **11:59 PM on the session date**. Session 2 meets in person, so that round's work is due before class begins.
2. Read what everyone else in your group posted.

3. Post one response to each of those posts by **11:59 PM on the Friday after that session date**. One round is the exception, where the response deadline moves to the Sunday, because the College is closed on that Friday.
4. Keep each response to **150 words or fewer**. Session 6 is the one exception, where the cap is 250 words.
5. Answer the questions given in that session's assignment sheet on the course website.

Four of the seven asynchronous sessions have a thesis step due: Sessions 6, 9, 10, and 12. The other three, Sessions 5, 7, and 11, have a **capstone memo** due instead. Each memo is 400 words or fewer, posted to your peer group's folder. The Session 7 memo also asks you to build one table showing your agency's budget, caseload, or output over recent years. Each memo's topic and questions are on the assignment sheet for that session, posted on the course website.

The two presentations

You give two presentations. Both are in person, and both are on your own work in progress.

The progress talk — Session 2, 3, or 4; five minutes; 3 points:

1. A third of the class speaks at each of Sessions 2, 3, and 4. I assign your session by lottery at Session 1.
2. Speak for five minutes, then take about five minutes of questions. **No slides and nothing to submit**, but come prepared with what you intend to say.
3. **I grade this on completion.** Cover the four points listed in the assignment sheet on the course website.
4. I do not grade polish, and I do not grade how far along you are. The three dates fall three weeks apart, so a Session 2 speaker has less done than a Session 4 speaker.

The final presentation — Session 13 or 14; ten minutes; 15 points, graded on quality rather than completion:

1. I assign your session by lottery at Session 1.
2. Speak for roughly ten minutes, then take about five minutes of questions.
3. **Slides are required.** Use no more than eight slides, and post them to the matching the course website assignment folder by class time.
4. If an emergency makes you miss your slot, email me that day. You will present at the remaining session, or by recorded video, with no penalty.

The rough-draft conference

Meet with me individually once, for 20–30 minutes, in the two weeks after the rough draft is due.

1. Sign up on the course website. Sign-up opens at Session 10, and Session 13 presenters pick first.
2. This conference is where I give you my main feedback on the whole document.
3. Be ready to walk me through any passage. Beyond the feedback, the conference is where I confirm that the draft is your own work and that you made proper use of AI tools under the policy below.
4. **A draft you cannot explain does not count as complete**, whatever its length.

Grades

I grade process milestones credit/no-credit. A complete, good-faith piece as specified earns full points; a thin or partial one earns half or none. **I grade the final capstone and the final presentation on quality rather than completion.**

The final capstone must contain all eleven elements as *Elements of a Capstone Thesis* defines them, meet the two requirements this course adds to that standard — say who could have been in your evidence and is not, and say what else could account for what you found — and follow the specifications under Submission and Format. A strong capstone thesis answers a central question, recommends something specific that fits within the constraints the thesis itself established, ties each claim to the evidence for that claim, names the real limits of what the evidence shows, and cites every source completely.

Item	Due	Points
Step 0. Topic statement	Before Session 1	1
Step 1. Problem statement	Session 2	3
Step 2. Network map + outreach plan	Session 3	3
Library guide + plagiarism tutorial	Session 3	1
Step 3. Annotated bibliography	Session 4	3
CITI certificates, both modules	Session 4	3
Step 4. Literature review draft	Session 6	4
Step 5. Agency history + current status	Session 8	3
Step 6. Methodology plan + interview guide	Session 9	3
Step 7. Evidence section draft	Session 10	4
Capstone memos A, B, and C	Sessions 5, 7, 11	6
Peer responses	Sessions 2, 5–7, 9–11	3
Progress talk	Session 2, 3, or 4	3
Schwartz capstone consultation	Session 10	1
Step 8. Rough draft	Session 12	9
Step 9. Final presentation	Session 13 or 14	15
Step 10. Final capstone	Last day of finals week	35
Total		100

Every item is credit/no-credit except the two in bold, which I grade on quality rather than completion.

There is no separate participation grade. You may miss one in-person session with no consequence. Each absence after that costs one point off your course total unless you post a make-up memo, to a maximum of four points. The full rule is under Course Standards.

Course Readings

This course is ZTC (“Zero Textbook Cost”). **You are not required to purchase anything.** I post every required reading on the course website.

Every required source, in order of first assignment:

- Main (nda)
- The Newman Library’s Marx Capstone research guide (Newman Library, Baruch College, 2026), and its plagiarism tutorial (Newman Library, Baruch College, nd)
- “Organization Diagnosis: Guidelines” (Main, ndb), and its crosswalk to the eleven elements
- Bardach (2012)
- **Sample capstone theses:** *Building Inspection*, *Sidewalk Prioritization*, and *Net Neutrality*
- The **Schwartz Institute annotated guides** to the Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Evidence section, and Executive Summary, and its guide to quantitative writing, all posted on the course website and linked under Writing Support
- Rosenbaum (2023), Chapters 1 and 3
- Campbell (1969)
- Rosenbaum (2017), pp. 142–144
- Freedman et al. (2007), Chapter 19
- Small (2009)
- Booth et al. (2024)
- Schaffer (2014)
- Small and Cook (2023)
- Kontokosta et al. (2017)
- Main (1983)
- Docherty and Smith (1999)

About the sample capstones. Read each one in full the first time I assign it, concentrating on any pages that session names. Later sessions may ask you to read a different part of the capstone. Two kinds of name have been removed: the author’s, and the name of anyone the author interviewed. Job titles, positions, and organizations are kept, and so are the names of people quoted from the public record. **Where a name has been removed, the text reads [redacted]. Posted for teaching use in this course only. Do not redistribute them.**

Course Standards

Attendance and Missed Sessions

One rule, applied the same way to everyone. It governs the seven in-person sessions only. Asynchronous sessions have deadlines, not attendance.

1. **You may miss one in-person session with no consequence.** No explanation, no documentation, no make-up memo, no penalty, and no need to write to me about it.
2. **Religious observance** is excused under New York State Education Law §224-a and does not use up your one free absence. If a date conflicts with your observance, email me in the first two weeks, and we will arrange an equivalent opportunity at no cost to you.
3. **For each in-person session you miss after that,** post a **400-word make-up memo** to your peer group's folder within seven days of the session you missed, working from that session's readings and from your group partners' account of the class, and saying what you changed in your own draft as a result. Without the memo, the absence **costs one point** off your course total, to a maximum of four points.
4. **Three things cannot be made up,** because they are events rather than sessions: your progress talk, your rough-draft conference, and an in-class writing workshop.

Submission and Format

1. Twelve-point font, double-spaced, one-inch margins, consecutively numbered pages. Every table and figure titled, numbered, and sourced.
2. Post to the matching the course website assignment folder **as a Word document or a PDF**. In-person sessions: before class begins. Asynchronous sessions: by 11:59 PM on the session date.
3. Two exceptions to that rule:
 - Post peer-group work and responses to your peer group's folder.
 - Submit the final capstone by the last day of finals week.
4. Cite in APA or Chicago style from the very first assignment — one style, consistently. If you have no preference, use APA.
5. If the course website fails at a deadline, email me the file. The timestamp on your email counts.

Incomplete and Late Assignments

1. **Two free extensions.** Twice this semester, take up to 72 extra hours on any credit/no-credit assignment. They do not apply to the rough draft, to peer-group work, to either presentation, to the make-up memo, or to the final capstone.
2. To use one extension, email me one line before the deadline. No reason needed.

3. Use at most one extension per assignment. You cannot use both extensions on the same assignment.
4. **Other late work** loses half its points, and I accept it up to the rough-draft deadline. Anything later earns feedback but no points.
5. **Peer-group work and responses.** Extensions do not apply, and a missed response loses its share of the 3 points.
6. **Rough draft and final presentation.** Late only by advance arrangement, because I schedule conference and presentation slots against those two deadlines.
7. **Final capstone.** Three points off per day late, out of 35. I cannot accept the capstone more than five days late, because grades are due shortly after. At three points a day, a capstone arriving on that last possible day has already lost 15 of its 35 points.
8. If an emergency makes that deadline impossible, contact me *before* the deadline about an incomplete (INC).
9. **My turnaround.** I mark each item within one week of its due date. I write comments on the numbered Steps and on the rough draft. The capstone memos get a mark rather than written comments, unless a memo needs a reply. Your main feedback on the whole document comes at the rough-draft conference, not in writing. If I will be slower than a week, I will say so in advance and adjust the next deadline accordingly.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

You are welcome to use large language models — ChatGPT, Claude, CoPilot, and the like — in the service of your own research and writing. Four uses are permitted:

- Brainstorming questions worth asking.
- Searching for leads on sources.
- Deciphering a dense statute or audit report.
- Tightening prose you have drafted yourself.

What is *not* permitted is having a model write your prose for you: The writing itself is yours. Spellcheck, grammar tools, and transcription software for your interview recordings are mechanical aids and need no disclosure.

That latitude comes with one non-negotiable condition: **You own everything you submit.**

1. **The output is yours.** “The model hallucinated” and “that is just what the chatbot gave me” are never valid defenses. If your thesis cites a study that was never written, or asserts a fact that is not so, the error is yours and no one else’s.
2. **You must be able to explain everything you submit.** You are answerable for every sentence, source, and number you hand in. The rough-draft conference is exactly that test: A passage you cannot walk me through — what the passage claims, on what evidence, from which source — does not count as your work.

3. **The research itself cannot be delegated.** The interviews, the site visits, and the judgment are yours to do.
4. **Disclose any AI use.** Put a short disclosure paragraph at the end of the assignment, before the bibliography, that does three things:
 - Names the tool and version.
 - States what you used the tool for.
 - Confirms that you reviewed and verified the output and take full responsibility for it.

Under the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy, generative AI use is a violation *unless* the syllabus permits that use. Undisclosed use is a breach of the permission given here. These tools also routinely misattribute or invent their sources; catching and correcting such errors before you submit is part of the same responsibility.

Academic Integrity

I will not tolerate violations of academic integrity under any circumstances. Read [CUNY's Academic Integrity Policy](#) and [Baruch's academic honesty policy](#).

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's words or ideas as your own. It includes:

- Word-for-word copying without quotation and citation.
- Paraphrasing without citation.
- Presenting another person's ideas as your own, even in your own words.

What follows a violation.

1. At minimum, you receive a zero on the assignment.
2. You may also fail the course, depending on how extensive the violation is and whether it recurs.
3. Baruch requires me to refer every case to the Office of the Dean of Students on a Faculty Report Form. The referral is not mine to waive.
4. If you are having difficulty with an assignment, come talk to me instead of presenting another author's work as your own.

Course Schedule and Readings

Baruch's academic calendar is available via the Office of the Registrar [here](#).

How to read what follows:

- Each session lists its date and modality — in person or asynchronous.
- **Days on which class does not meet, or on which the College follows a changed schedule, appear in this color.**
- Within a session, anything **due** comes first, marked ★ and set in **blue**.
- Anything distributed follows, marked ○.
- Read everything listed under a session *before* that session.

Part I (Sessions 1–4): The question, the network, and the sources

Session 1 — In person: What a capstone is, and research ethics in the field

- ★ **Step 0, topic statement — posted to the course website before class; bring a copy**
- Assigned: **both CITI modules** (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative, 2026), certificates due at Session 4
 - “HSR (Human Subjects Research) for Social & Behavioral Faculty, Graduate Students & Postdoctoral Scholars,” social-behavioral track (3–4 hours)
 - “Responsible Conduct of Research — CUNY Researchers” (1–2 hours)
- Assigned: the Newman Library's plagiarism tutorial (Newman Library, Baruch College, nd), certificate due at Session 3

Required reading

- Main (nda), §3.1

Recommended readings

- Sample capstone *Sex Clubs*, entire
- Booth et al. (2024), Chapter 17, “The Ethics of Research,” pp. 285–291
- Booth et al. (2024), “Your Research and Your Audience,” pp. 1–14. Main (nda)

Session 2 — In person: Defining the problem

- ★ **Step 1, problem statement — to your peer group’s folder before class begins**, and declare the organizational-diagnosis path if you are taking it
- ★ **Peer responses by 11:59 PM on the Friday after this session**

Progress talks, group 1

Required readings

- Main (nda), §3
- “Organization Diagnosis: Guidelines” (Main, ndb) and its crosswalk to the eleven elements, whichever path you take
- Bardach (2012), **Step One: Define the Problem**, pp. 1–10
- Bardach (2012), **Part II**, “Gaining Access and Engaging Assistance,” pp. 89–93
- Sample capstone *Building Inspection*, entire, with particular attention to the introduction and problem statement, pp. 1–5
- Schwartz Institute, **annotated guide to the Introduction**
- Booth et al. (2024), §16.2, “Giving a Preliminary Presentation,” pp. 275–277, three pages on how to give a progress talk

Recommended readings

- Booth et al. (2024), Chapter 1, “From Topics to Questions,” pp. 21–34
- Booth et al. (2024), Chapter 2, “From Questions to a Problem,” pp. 35–48

Session 3 — In person: Research methods for the capstone

- ★ **Step 2, policy network map and outreach plan**
- ★ **Plagiarism tutorial certificate**

Progress talks, group 2

Required readings

- The Newman Library’s Marx Capstone research guide (Newman Library, Baruch College, 2026)
- Main (nda), §3.1.3
- Rosenbaum (2023), Chapter 1, “The Effects Caused by Treatments,” pp. 1–13
- Rosenbaum (2023), Chapter 3, “Observational Studies: The Problem,” entire, with particular attention to pp. 47–58
- Campbell (1969), entire, with particular attention to pp. 409–414
- Rosenbaum (2017), “The Connecticut Crackdown on Speeding,” pp. 142–144

Recommended readings

- Rosenbaum (2023), Chapter 6, pp. 103–116
- Booth et al. (2024), Chapter 3, “Finding and Evaluating Sources,” pp. 53–73

Session 4 — In person: Schwartz Institute workshop, “Understanding the Literature Review”

- ★ [Step 3, annotated working bibliography](#)
- ★ [CITI certificates, both modules](#)

You do not need a draft of your literature review, though you should have started reading your sources by now. The workshop works from example passages to show how to organize a literature review.

Progress talks, group 3

Required readings

- Main (nda), §4
- Main (nda), Appendix 5
- Booth et al. (2024), Chapter 5, “Making Good Arguments: An Overview,” pp. 101–113
- Booth et al. (2024), Chapter 8, “Warrants,” pp. 137–153
- Schwartz Institute, [annotated guide to the Literature Review](#)
- Sample capstone *Sidewalk Prioritization*, entire, with particular attention to the literature review, pp. 8–15

Recommended readings

- Booth et al. (2024), Chapter 4, “Engaging Sources,” pp. 74–94
- Booth et al. (2024), Chapter 12, “Incorporating Sources,” pp. 201–216

Part II (Sessions 5–12): Evidence, and the draft

Session 5 — Asynchronous: Auditing sources, and who ends up in the evidence

- ★ [Capstone Memo A, evidence audit — 400 words or fewer, plus two tables, to your peer group’s folder by 11:59 PM on the session date](#)
- ★ [Peer responses by 11:59 PM on the Friday after this session](#)

Required readings

- Freedman et al. (2007), Chapter 19, §§1–3, pp. 333–339
- Campbell (1969), re-read pp. 414–416
- Bardach (2012), **Step Two: Assemble Some Evidence**, pp. 11–16
- Small (2009), pp. 5–21
- Booth et al. (2024), Chapter 7, “Assembling Reasons and Evidence,” pp. 124–136
- Sample capstone *Net Neutrality*, entire, with particular attention to “Does Regulation hinder infrastructure development?”, pp. 17–22

Session 6 — Asynchronous: The literature review

- ★ **Step 4, literature review draft — by 11:59 PM on the session date**
- ★ **Peer responses by 11:59 PM on the Friday after this session** — the cap is 250 words per response this round, not the usual 150

Required reading

- Schwartz Institute, [annotated guide to the Literature Review](#), re-read as you draft. You read it at Session 4, before the workshop.

Session 7 — Asynchronous: History and current status

- ★ **Capstone Memo B, constraints — 400 words or fewer, plus one table, by 11:59 PM on the session date**
- ★ **Peer responses by 11:59 PM on the Friday after this session**

Required readings

- Main (nda), §5
- Booth et al. (2024), Chapter 13, “Communicating Evidence Visually,” pp. 217–234
- Kontokosta et al. (2017), on why a count of 311 complaints may reflect who complains rather than what is wrong
- Sample capstone *Building Inspection*, re-read pp. 13–19, the history and current status

Session 8 — In person: Schwartz Institute workshop, “Evidence, Analysis, and Claims”

- ★ **Step 5, agency history and current status draft**

You do not need a draft of your evidence section, though it helps to have begun thinking about what evidence you will use. The workshop works from example passages to show how to analyze evidence and support claims.

Required readings

- Main (nda), §6
- Main (nda), Appendices 1–2
- Bardach (2012), **Part II**, “Conducting a Policy Research Interview,” pp. 94–102
- Schaffer (2014), on interviewing to find out how the person using a word understands it
- Schwartz Institute, [annotated guide to the Evidence section](#)

Session 9 — Asynchronous: Writing the methodology

- ★ [Step 6, methodology plan and interview guide — by 11:59 PM on the session date](#)
- ★ [Peer responses by 11:59 PM on the Friday after this session](#)

Required readings

- Schwartz Institute, [annotated guide to the Methodology](#)
- Small and Cook (2023)
- Sample capstone *Sidewalk Prioritization*, re-read pp. 16–32, where the analysis rests on a survey of 31 senior managers

Recommended readings

- Jerolmack and Khan (2014), on the gap between what people say they do and what they do
- Bleich and Pekkanen (2015), on reporting whom you sought, who agreed, and who declined or never responded

Session 10 — Asynchronous: Building the evidence section

- ★ [Step 7, evidence section draft, in an assembled file — by 11:59 PM on the session date](#)
- ★ [Peer responses by 11:59 PM on the Friday after this session](#)
- ★ [Schwartz capstone consultation confirmation](#)
- Rough-draft conference sign-up opens on the course website.

Required readings

- Main (nda), §7
- Main (1983), pp. 3–13, where Main checks an advocacy group’s estimate of the homeless population against the city’s shelter counts, names the interest behind that estimate, and states the limits of both sources. As a magazine article, not a capstone, the piece is not meant to follow the eleven elements, so read it for that check rather than as a model for structuring your own capstone.
- Schwartz Institute, [annotated guide to the Evidence section](#), re-read as you draft. You read it at Session 8, before the workshop.
- Schwartz Institute, [guide to quantitative writing](#)

Recommended readings

- Cook et al. (2024), on comparing 311 complaints with an independent assessment of road conditions, in order to separate reporting from what is actually wrong
- Sample capstone *Building Inspection*, re-read the evidence tables, pp. 21–28 and Appendix B

Session 11 — Asynchronous: The recommendation

- ★ **Capstone Memo C, the recommendation — 400 words or fewer, to your peer group's folder by 11:59 PM on the session date**
- ★ **Peer responses by 11:59 PM on the Sunday after this session**

Required readings

- Main (nda), §§8–9
- Booth et al. (2024), Chapter 9, “Acknowledgments and Responses,” pp. 154–167
- Bardach (2012), **Step Five: Project the Outcomes**, pp. 47–53, through “Break-Even Estimates”

Session 12 — Asynchronous: Assembling the draft

- ★ **Step 8, rough draft — complete document, by 11:59 PM on the session date**
- Rough-draft conferences run over the following two weeks, by appointment.

Required readings

- Main (nda), §§1–2, §§10–11, and Appendices 3–4
- Booth et al. (2024), Chapter 6, “Making Claims,” pp. 114–123
- Bardach (2012), **Step Eight: Tell Your Story**, pp. 70–78
- Booth et al. (2024), Chapter 16, “Research Presentations,” pp. 272–282. §16.3, p. 277, is on the final presentation specifically
- Docherty and Smith (1999), on a five-part structure for your discussion: what you found, the strengths and weaknesses of your study, how your findings compare with those of other studies, what your findings mean, and what remains unanswered
- Schwartz Institute, [annotated guide to the Executive Summary](#)

Recommended readings

- Booth et al. (2024), Chapters 10 and 11, “Planning and Drafting” and “Revising and Organizing,” pp. 175–200
- Booth et al. (2024), Chapter 14, “Introductions and Conclusions,” pp. 235–251

Part III (Sessions 13–14): Presenting

Session 13 — In person: Final presentations, group 1

- ★ **Step 9, final presentation — group 1**

Session 14 — In person: Final presentations, group 2

★ [Step 9, final presentation — group 2](#)

Last 15 minutes: **course evaluations**. Bring a device you can complete them on.

Required reading

- Main (nda), §§1–11

Recommended reading

- Booth et al. (2024), Chapter 15, “Revising Style: Telling Your Story Clearly,” pp. 252–271

Finals week

★ [Step 10, final capstone due the last day of finals week](#)

No meeting. There is no final examination in this course.

Baruch College Policies and Resources

Student Disability Services

Baruch College has a continuing commitment to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you may need an accommodation to participate fully in this class, contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. All discussions remain confidential.

Office of the Dean of Students

The Office of the Dean of Students assists students with academic and personal concerns, including the [Notice of Absence](#) process for documented medical and family emergencies. More information is available [here](#). Note that the Dean of Students does not verify absences for scheduled appointments, vacations, or work obligations. Those fall under this course's attendance rule instead — one free absence, and a make-up memo for each one after that.

Writing Support

The Baruch Writing Center is a free service that gives you honest, personal feedback on your writing. Visit at any stage of the writing process, with any kind of writing.

- The Center's professional consultants help you read and evaluate sources, organize your ideas and evidence, and develop focused arguments.
- Book an appointment at bc.mywconline.com.
- The Center's site is writingcenter.baruch.cuny.edu.

The Bernard L. Schwartz Communication Institute offers one-to-one writing consultations built specifically for Marx capstone students; see also the [Marx writing support page](#).

- **The Institute delivers this course's two in-class workshops**, at Sessions 4 and 8.
- Neither workshop asks for a draft, and both come before the section that workshop covers is due.
- **One consultation is required**, and it must take place before you submit Step 8, the rough draft.
- There is no self-service scheduler. Students book by emailing the Assistant Director for Writing in Public and International Affairs.
- Upload the Institute's confirmation that the consultation *took place* **by Session 10**. A booking confirmation alone does not count.
- Attend more than one if you want to. I grade only the first.

The Institute also publishes short annotated guides to the sections of a capstone, marked up to show how each one works. I link each guide below and post it on the course website. Most guides come at the session when their step is due. Two of them cover the same subject as a

workshop, so those two come earlier: You read the Literature Review guide at Session 4 and again at Session 6, and the Evidence guide at Session 8 and again at Session 10. That way you see the model before the workshop and again while you draft.

Guide	Read it for
Introduction	Step 1, problem statement
Literature Review	Step 4, literature review draft
Methodology	Step 6, methodology plan
Evidence	Step 7, evidence section draft
Quantitative Writing	Step 7, evidence section draft
Executive Summary	Step 8, rough draft

Research Help

The Newman Library's [Marxe Capstone guide](#) covers databases, search strategy, government and think-tank sources, and citation management. When you cannot find sources on your topic, email the Public and International Affairs Librarian.

Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination

You can submit a report of discrimination and/or retaliation via CUNY's centralized reporting platform [here](#). For more information about CUNY's Policy on Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination, please access it [here](#). Complaints may also be directed to Baruch's Office of Diversity, Compliance & Equity Initiatives.

Campus Intervention Team

The Campus Intervention Team provides a support system for students in crisis. Any member of the college community can report a concern; all reports are confidential. More information is available [here](#).

Advisement and Career Services

Marxe academic advisement takes appointments via [Navigate](#). Marxe career services are reachable via [Marxe CareerConnect](#).

References

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