

O'Neill

Lead for the Greater Good

Capstone in Public and Environmental Affairs
with
United Nations Development Programme & Government of Armenia
SDG Innovation Lab

O'Neill Professor: Jennifer N. Brass, brassj@iu.edu, O'Neill SPEA room 457
Class Meetings: Fall 2024; 9:45-11:00AM

Course Description from the IU Bulletin

Interdisciplinary course organized as faculty-coached class project on a management/policy topic determined by an external client. Course goals are professional preparation and integration of degree program knowledge.

More Detailed Course Description

The O'Neill Capstone courses are intended to provide hands-on consulting experience to students in an interdisciplinary framework. With faculty coaching as necessary, students coordinate with an external client organization to work together in a collaborative learning format. The course is a capstone for the core curriculum, not a concentration element. This means that capstones intentionally deal with interdisciplinary, interrelated issues that generally arise in the professional positions students will attain. For this capstone, students may have expertise in nonprofit or NGO management, women's advocacy, or international development, but it is not a requirement or an expectation.

The immediate objective of this course is to prepare a high-quality set of deliverables for our client. Broader objectives are to help students develop the following skills: professionalism, sustainability, financial management, and public and nonprofit management. There will be some guidance by the instructor to accomplish the organizational goals, but part of the challenge of the course will be for the students to self-organize and then execute this project on their own. The instructor will serve as a consultant to the students.

In this Capstone, students will work with one of the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) cutting-edge programs, the Armenia National SDG Innovation Lab, which is a joint venture with the Government of Armenia (GOAM) to mainstream evidence-based policymaking and contribute to the progress toward the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

With the support of OECD's Observatory for Public Sector Innovation (OECD OPSI) the project aims to support GOAM with a systemic approach to public sector innovation and participatory processes in general in government, as well as in selected sectoral policy areas and participatory budgeting. To date, OECD OPSI, along with SDG Innovation Lab, has conducted a scoping mission in Armenia to identify the main players of the public sector innovation ecosystem. OECD, with support from the Lab, is in the process of completing an innovation capacity assessment identifying the most feasible models of enhancing national innovation capacity in the country. When O'Neill MPA students join the process in August 2024, these models will have been selected for piloting in several areas.

Students will work with the SDG Lab team members on several aspects of the project, including such things as creating and analyzing monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) metrics and frameworks, providing

information that will help the SDG Lab design of additional interventions in the medium term, and conducting research on behavioral interventions as the program unfolds. The exact contours of MPA student involvement will be determined during Summer 2024, based on the needs of the Lab.

Students who sign up will travel to Armenia during Thanksgiving Break 2024 to work directly with SDG Innovation Lab team, interact with Armenian students, and visit UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the country. Travel is not required for enrollment in the Capstone.

About Armenia

The Republic of Armenia is a landlocked country in the Southern Caucasus with a population of 2.97 million. It is an upper middle-income country with a Human Development Index (HDI) score of 0.760, putting Armenia in the high human development category (HDI, 2019.)

Country Context:

Population, million	2.9
GDP, current US\$ bln	19.5
GDP per capita, current US\$	6,572.2
Life Expectancy at birth, years	72.0

Source: World Bank, Country Overview, 2023

Freedom Index: Armenia is considered a *Partly Free* country.

Global Freedom Score	54/100 (Partly Free)
Internet Freedom Score	72/100 (Free)
Political Rights	23/40
Civil Liberties	32/60

Source: Freedom House, Country Report, 2022

Despite an increase in HDI of more than 20 percent since 1991, 26.4 percent of the population still lived below the poverty line in 2019, with 2.7 percent classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty. Disparities between urban and rural areas, gender inequality, outward migration, and high climate change exposure further impact the country's resilience, competitiveness, and well-being (Armstat, 2020). These pre-existing inequalities and vulnerabilities were amplified by the dual impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflicts with Azerbaijan in 2020, as well as the influx of over 100,000 Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh seeking refuge within Armenian borders in 2023 (WB, 2023.) Armenia has undergone a profound transformation since independence, including after the peaceful transition of power in 2018 which triggered renewed commitments to a human-centered governance system, investments in human capital, and the realization of the human rights agenda. Over the past half-decade, Armenia has achieved significant developmental progress. By March 2023, Armenia transitioned from being an International Development Association (IDA) recipient to becoming an IDA donor, a milestone reached just nine years after graduating from IDA recipient status and four years after attaining upper-middle-income country status. Armenia has been actively involved in a broad spectrum of reforms, spanning sectors such as justice, healthcare, and social protection systems (UNSDCF, 2021).

Public Sector Reforms and Participatory Processes in Armenia

The Republic of Armenia (RA) earned recognition as of 2018 as one of the best-performing countries in the post-Soviet space in terms of democratic reform, addressing with significant success long-standing problems such as systemic corruption, opaque policymaking, a flawed electoral system, and weak rule of law. However, democratic governance remains fragile. Many institutions and processes have not yet been consolidated. Despite this, the Armenian government (GOAM) is determined to continue its overall reform path, including making public institutions more inclusive, effective, and accountable. To this end, a new paradigm of undertaking reforms is emerging, which requires innovative approaches in employing strategic, institutional, and human capital changes within the public sector in Armenia. Cultivating a new mindset, redesigning

institutions, and reshaping learning experiences within the public sector the application of cutting-edge tools and methods that have been widely tested globally. Of these methods are agile management systems and institutional transformation and design thinking that empower organizations and sectors to tackle wicked problems under fast-changing circumstances and in contexts filled with growing uncertainties. These shall be achieved through a reform of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) to introduce innovative and participatory mechanisms in governance as part of a comprehensive reform of public administration, which was finally detailed in a concept dated June 2023 and shared among selected potential donors.

Class Format

This course will have a workshop format. Class members will divide into groups to address the various goals of the client. Each group will focus on one major element of the project, but students will need to also consider how groups will work together to communicate with the client, deliver a cohesive final presentation, and compile a single final portfolio of deliverables. Projects culminate in a public presentation of deliverables that are completed for the client.

Most of the group work will take place outside of regular class sessions. Students are expected to contribute **150 hours of work over the course of the semester**. Because of this, the full class will not meet at every session. Class sessions for which a full class meeting is not required are identified as “Group Meetings” in the Schedule of Classes. These class sessions provide a time and location at which all group members should be available to meet with one another. Groups may choose to use these sessions for this purpose, or may meet outside of these class sessions. For these classes, the instructor will generally be available in her office or on Zoom to meet with any groups or individual students who wish to consult. For those class sessions identified as “Groups Meet With Instructor,” each group (with all group members present) will be expected to meet with the instructor in the classroom to discuss group progress, issues, and general questions. A schedule with each group’s meeting time will be distributed for these sessions after the group structure has been established.

Project Elements

The SDG Lab Capstone project will consist of three or four large, inter-related tasks, which Professor Brass and the SDG Lab team will announce in class. Because the program is a dynamic one with intentional experimentation built-in, there may be changes and challenges along the way, and we must be prepared to pivot as needed.

Depending on the number, interests, and experience of students enrolled, students will be each assigned or asked to choose to work primarily on one of the tasks, but coordination and communication among groups will be necessary. The tasks will be more fully determined within the first month of the semester, when we will work collaborative with SDG Lab to develop mutually meaningful projects and a clear Scope of Work.

Learning Outcomes

1. Construct a team based on team member skill sets that optimizes the potential to produce very high quality project work. Establish, implement, and modify as needed effective means for managing the team's work, communicating with and among team members, and resolving disputes involving team members.
2. Inspire leadership skills within and across project teams to inspire and coordinate the work of classmates in order to complete project work in a timely way and to maximize its quality. Evaluate whether and how to supply input to leaders on a given issue, and perform work according to instruction and direction from leaders.
3. Establish realistic schedules for completion of project tasks, track progress efficiently and accurately, and adjust schedules appropriately to account for changes in scope and other circumstances that modify the project direction or deliverables.
4. Identify, assess, and incorporate into the project schedule and work a variety of time and resource constraints, and develop methods to maximize the time and resources available. Plan individual and team work to minimize the risk of delaying other parts of the project.

5. Integrate, as individuals performing work within a team, skills and knowledge acquired throughout the masters curriculum; integrate the work of team members contributing different skill sets and expertise, into a well-organized, holistic final product.
6. Enhance listening skills; design and deliver effective, audience appropriate communications that are responsive and professional in style, format, and tone.
7. Establish clear expectations with client on the project scope and planned deliverables; deliver swift, responsive, and professional replies to client inquiries; coordinate client communications to maximize their value for the project and avoid inappropriate demands on client time and resources.
8. Plan and conduct research and analysis, and develop recommendations that expressly reflect and appropriately integrate any conditions of uncertainty.
9. Organize, write, and present a professional quality report, and PowerPoint presentation for (and to) the client and the O'Neill community both summarizing and detailing the project research, analysis, conclusions and recommendations.

Course Requirements and Grading Criteria

An oral and written work plan (SOW), an oral and written progress report, a draft of the final deliverables (as agreed to in the SOW), a preliminary presentation of the final deliverables, a final, integrated portfolio of deliverables, and a presentation to the client will be part of the requirements. Grading will be a combination of group, peer, and individual evaluations. The following grading criteria will be used:

Class Work Plan (SOW): 15%

Group Progress Report and Midpoint Assignments: 10%

Preliminary Project Presentation and Draft Deliverables: 5%

Final Project Presentation: 15%

Final Portfolio of Deliverables: 25%

Peer and Self-Evaluations: 15%

Class Participation including Attendance, Attitude, and Participation Assignments in Canvas: 15%

Everyone in a group will receive the same grade for nearly all of the assignments; this is the instructors' overall assessment of each group's effort. The class as a whole will get a grade for the Work Plan/Statement of Work, which must include a plan to create a coherent portfolio of group deliverables. The peer- and self- evaluations will be done in the middle and at the end of the semester and will provide an opportunity for each student to assess the contributions of themselves, other group members, and possibly other class members. The participation grade is an assessment of individual contributions to the class from the instructor's perspective.

Expectations of Students

- **SOW:** Students must produce a client- and instructor-approved SOW within the first month of the semester. The SOW shall be considered binding, and will only be modified if agreed upon by mutual consent.
 - The work plan is a critical element of the course. It should be designed by all class members to address each group's anticipated major tasks, the timeline for these tasks, and the overall method and timeline for collaborating across groups as necessary. The work plan should include an organizational strategy for ensuring cooperation and coordination within and across groups during the semester, particularly since the project's components are rather interdependent and some can only be adequately addressed through a coordinated strategy. Formal presentation of the work plan and discussion with the instructor (and possibly the client) should result in a revised document. This revised work plan will guide each group and the class

throughout the remainder of the semester.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY:** Students will respect client confidentiality and privacy as outlined in the confidentiality clause of the statement of work. Students must sign a confidentiality agreement if requested by the client.
- **CLIENT-TEAM INTERACTIONS:** All interactions with the client must be structured, professional, and timely, as agreed upon in the Deliverables section of the SOW.
 - Each group within a Capstone must designate one student to act as Client Liaison for each client for the duration of the process, clearly delegated to be the main group contact for the client. When multiple clients or client consultants exist, multiple liaisons may be designated.
 - Client Liaisons must coordinate across groups to ensure that client contact is efficient and information acquisition is maximized.
- **TIME COMMITMENT:** Each student shall expect to dedicate approximately 150 hours over the course of the semester to this project.
- **STATUS & PROGRESS REPORTS:** Students must deliver regular status (informal but professional) and formal progress reports, structured and timed as stipulated in the Deliverables section of the SOW and the syllabus.
 - The status and progress reports should discuss work accomplished to date, upcoming challenges and anticipated problems, anticipated changes to the work plan, how the group is coordinating with other groups, and any other necessary details.
- **MIDTERM AND END OF TERM DELIVERABLES:** This Capstone will have two sets of deliverables – around the middle of the term and at the end. Deliverables to the Client include Frameworks for Evaluation, Evaluation Reports, and a final portfolio. Drafts of these must be reviewed by the professor before given to the client. A draft of the final portfolio for the professor must be ready for initial comments and approval before the final presentation date. The Capstone will culminate in a final portfolio of professional quality and a professional presentation to the client and the O'Neill community.

Expectations for All Deliverables Given to Client

- **DELIVERABLES** must be of *professional quality* with regards to the following (specifics will vary depending on task):
 - Writing (grammar and style/tone)
 - Organization and layout
 - Depth of analysis and insight
 - Presentation of product
 - Timeliness
- **FINAL PRESENTATION:**
 - Slides shall be of professional quality, and will be reviewed by the faculty mentor.
 - Presentation will be rehearsed, organized, and professional. Presenters will be appropriately/professionally dressed.

- Invitations will be sent out to all invitees two weeks prior to the presentation date. These invitations will be formally written and include a report abstract. Invitations may be sent for distribution through the O'Neill Master's Program Office, and via relevant listservs.
- Presenters shall plan for a 45-minute oral presentation, followed by at least 45 minutes for Q&A.

Class Professionalism Policy

Students are expected to act in a professional manner that emulates the real world. This includes all relationships (person to person, group to group, class to client). Violations of professionalism will result in a significant reduction in the participation portion of an individual's grade for the course, and could result in an intervention leading to expulsion from the course. Violations of professionalism include, but are not limited to the following:

- Engaging in any activity that prevents one from fully participating in the class
 - Accessing email, texts, videos, or surfing the web during class
 - Sleeping during class
 - Arriving late for class or leaving class early (unless agreed upon by instructor beforehand)
 - Working on material for another course during class
- Exhibiting disrespect for the instructor, classmates, or client
- Disruptive behavior – e.g. carrying on side conversations or being excessively noisy
- Plagiarism

Plagiarism is using another person's words, ideas, artistic creations, or other intellectual property without giving proper credit. According to the Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct, a student must give credit to the work of another person when he does any of the following:

- Quotes another person's actual words, either oral or written;
- Paraphrases another person's words, either oral or written;
- Uses another person's idea, opinion, or theory; or
- Borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative material, unless the information is common knowledge.

Do not plagiarize. I know many students are worried that they accidentally plagiarize. A way to avoid this is to separate the reading/research and writing/analysis processes – do not go back and forth between writing and reading, or write while you have the article open. (Note: linking together a string of quotes is not good writing – I want to see your ability to synthesize and analyze what you have learned/read.)

Artificial Intelligence (AI, e.g., ChatGPT)

Including words written by AI tools (like ChatGPT) as if they are your own words is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a violation of IU's academic integrity policies and has serious consequences. So—don't have AI write any of your work for you. [Note: it's also a very bad idea to have AI write things for you because sometimes [AI just makes things up](#)—which can be both [embarrassing and illegal](#).]

The code of student conduct regarding plagiarism is available at <http://studentcode.iu.edu> . And there is a 10-minute online test at <https://www.indiana.edu/~academy/firstPrinciples/certificationTests/index.html> .

Additional Resources

1. [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) Most IU students visit CAPS at some point during their IU career, and living during a pandemic is a stressful time. CAPS services may help you deal with this or other stress. You can go for a single visit or for repeated help, and services are online for now. For information about services offered to students by CAPS: <http://healthcenter.indiana.edu/counseling/index.shtml>.

2. Counseling and other Wellness Resources at O'Neill: Well-being is a core value for O'Neill, and as such, the School offers opportunities for enhancing mental and emotional help in-house. See here for making in-house CAPS appointments, health and well-being coaching, and other resources: <https://oneill.indiana.edu/student-experience/wellness/index.html>
3. TimelyCare: Students have free, 24/7 access to virtual mental health care services with TimelyCare. Students do not need insurance to access TimelyCare services. <https://www.iu.edu/mental-health/find-resources/timely-care.html#0>
4. Mentoring for O'Neill Students Whether you're an undergrad or a Masters students, there is an O'Neill mentoring program for you. <https://oneill.indiana.edu/student-experience/mentor-collective/index.html>
5. Accessible Educational Services Securing accommodations for a student with qualifying medical conditions is a responsibility shared by the student, the instructor and the AES Office. For information about support services or accommodations available to students, and for the procedures to be followed by students and instructors: <https://studentaffairs.indiana.edu/student-support/iub-aes/index.html>
6. Crimson Cupboard If you are struggling with not having enough to eat, Crimson Cupboard offers free healthy food to IUB students. <https://studentaffairs.indiana.edu/student-support/crimson-cupboard/index.html>
7. Student Support Many students need additional support at some point in time, whether financial, nutritional, as a student with a disability, or for other reasons. Student support services are here for the university as a whole: <https://studentaffairs.indiana.edu/student-support/index.html>
8. Writing Tutorial Services If you are worried about plagiarism or your writing ability, the Writing Tutorial Service at IU can be an asset for you. WTS is free to all students. You can go for a single session to get help on an individual writing assignment or go repeatedly. <https://wts.indiana.edu/>
9. Religion Observation. In accordance with the Office of the Dean of Faculties, any student who wishes to receive an excused absence from class must submit a request form available from the Dean of Faculties for each day to be absent. This form must be presented to the course instructor by the end of the second week of this semester. A separate form must be submitted for each day. The instructor will fill in the bottom section of the form and then return the original to the student. Information about the policy on religious observation can be found at the following website: <https://policies.iu.edu/policies/aca-59-accommodation-religious-observances/index.html> .
10. Commitment to Diversity: Find your home and community at IU. Although this is not an exhaustive list of communities on campus, here are formal cultural centers on campus:

Asian Culture Center: 807 East Tenth Street, Bloomington, IN 47408; Phone: 812-856-5361; Email: acc@indiana.edu; Website: <https://asianresource.indiana.edu/index.html>

First Nations Educational & Cultural Center: 712 E 8th St., Bloomington, IN 47408; Phone: 812-855-4814; Email: fnecc@indiana.edu; Website: <https://firstnations.indiana.edu/contact/index.html>

LGBTQ+ Culture Center: 705 E 7th St., Bloomington, Indiana 47408; Phone: 812-855-4252; Email: glbtserve@indiana.edu; Website: <https://lgbtq.indiana.edu/contact/index.html>

La Casa Latino Culture Center: 715 E 7th St., Bloomington IN, 47408; Phone: 812-855-0174; Email: lacasa@indiana.edu; Website: <https://lacasa.indiana.edu/>

Neal Marshall Black Culture Center 275 N Jordan Ave Bloomington, Indiana 47405; Phone: 812-855-9271; Email: nmgrad@indiana.edu; Website: <https://blackculture.indiana.edu/index.html>

Jewish Culture Center, 730 E 3rd St., Bloomington, Indiana 47401; Phone: 812-336-3824; Website: <https://iuhillel.org/iu-jewish-culture-center>

11. IU is dedicated to supporting students who are pregnant. You should visit pregnancy.iu.edu Links to an external site.. It will tell you about your rights and resources available to you, such as academic accommodations.”
12. Sexual Harassment. As your instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. Title IX and our own Sexual Misconduct policy prohibit sexual misconduct. If you have experienced sexual misconduct, or know someone who has, the University can help. If you are seeking help and would like to talk to someone confidentially, you can make an appointment with:

1. The Sexual Assault Crisis Service (SACS) at 812-855-8900
2. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 812-855-5711
3. Confidential Victim Advocates (CVA) at 812-856-2469
4. IU Health Center at 812-855-4011

For more information about available resources: <http://stopsexualviolence.iu.edu/help/index.html> . It is also important to know that federal regulations and University policy require me to promptly convey any information about potential sexual misconduct known to me to our campus' Deputy Title IX Coordinator or IU's Title IX Coordinator. In that event, they will work with a small number of others on campus to ensure that appropriate measures are taken and resources are made available to the student who may have been harmed. Protecting a student's privacy is of utmost concern, and all involved will only share information with those that need to know to ensure the University can respond and assist. I encourage you to visit <http://stopsexualviolence.iu.edu/help/index.html> to learn more.

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Schedule of Classes and Learning Materials (may change if needed by students, client, or prof)

Week	Dates	Class Topic and Readings	Assignments Due
1	Aug 26-28	<p>Introduction to Capstone: the course and the client Aug 26 Read: Syllabus Read: Basics of Capstone Read: Client Website, in whole (https://www.sdglab.am/en) Innovative and participatory policymaking in Armenia project overview</p> <p>Aug 28 Read: SDG Lab Five-Year Report Read: Armenia Beyond Boundaries Meet the client; learn about the project</p>	<p>Submit four short assignments listed in Canvas Week 1 Module by 9AM on Tuesday, Sept 3 (odd due date due to the Labor Day Holiday):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Syllabus Review 2. GlobeSmart Canvas Discussion assignment 3. Interest Inventory 4. Group preferences
2	Labor Day, Sept 4	<p>Sept 2 No class: Labor Day Holiday in US</p> <p>Sept 4 Read: Advice for Capstone students (general and on working in groups) Review: The GlobeSmart learning modules on working across cultures</p>	Note assignments given in Module 1 all due on Sept 3
3	Sept 9 -11	<p>Sept 9 Read: Project Management for Capstone (PowerPoint Slides) Skim: Example Work Plans</p> <p>Sept 11 Presenting Draft Scope of Work / Work Plan</p>	<p>Project Management group assignment due Sept 9 In class presentation of Scope of Work: Sept 11</p>

		Sept 16 Overview of Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Readings: To Be Announced	
4	Sept 16-18	Sept 18 Understanding Log Frames Discussion of Next Few Weeks	Final Work Plan due Sept 16
5	Sept 23-25	Group Meetings with Professor Discussion of Log Frame, appropriate tools for your sector and assignment	Draft log frame due at meeting with Professor First Peer/Self Evaluation due on Sept 25
6	Sept 30, Oct 2	Group Meetings	
7	Oct 7-9	Group Meetings with Professor	Draft Frameworks for Evaluation due to Prof Oct 7
8	Oct 14-16	Group Meetings	Framework for Evaluations due to Client Oct 16
		Oct 21 Group Meeting	
9	Oct 21-23	Oct 25 How to do Presentations Well Read: Several items on presenting well (in Canvas)	Second Peer/Self Evaluation due Oct 21 Progress Report due Oct 21
		Oct 28 Group Meeting	
10	Oct 28-30	Oct 30 Progress Report Meeting with Whole Class	Presentation of Progress Reports to the class; collaboration across groups
11	Nov 4 and 6	Group Meetings	
12	Nov 11-13	Group Meetings with Professor	Informal Status Reports
13	Nov 18-20	Class Meetings to discuss collaboration across groups	
No classes: Thanksgiving Holiday Break / Trip to Armenia			
		December 2: Group Work	
14	Dec 2-4	Dec 4: Draft Presentation to Prof Brass	Final Presentation Draft on Dec 4 Report due to Client December 6
15	Dec 9-11	One day: Presentation to Client Other day: Semester wrap up, debrief, and learning	Presentation to Client done this week Draft Portfolio to Prof Brass Dec 9
	Dec 15-19	Finals Week	Final Deliverables due Dec 18 Third Peer/Self Evaluation due Dec 18

