

**JUSTICE ACTION CENTER CAPSTONE PROJECT (2)**  
**SYLLABUS, FALL/SPRING**  
**2011-2012**

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**OVERVIEW**

The JAC Capstone Project is a two-credit course exclusively for students affiliated with the Justice Action Center in their final year. The final capstone project can take many forms:

1. a written project with practical application about a social justice topic, such as a law or policy analysis of empirical data, a policy paper, a committee report, model legislation, regulatory comments, a practitioner or *pro se* manual, or an amicus brief;
2. a portfolio of work from a student's participation in a social justice legal experience, such as a class action lawsuit, an organizing campaign, or a real estate or other transaction that benefits traditionally underserved communities or individuals, accompanied by a narrative memo describing the project and the student's role in the project; or
3. a project related to a clinical course that is in addition to the required clinical work.

Students will develop their own project proposals for approval. Details about the application process for project approval appear below and in the attached capstone project application.

Examples of past capstone projects can be found on JAC's website at [www.nyls.edu/capstones](http://www.nyls.edu/capstones).

Students are supervised in their capstone projects by faculty and, if appropriate, practicing attorneys. Students complete their projects in their final year of study and present them in a public forum.

To ensure full credit, all students must register for the JAC Capstone in *both* the fall and spring semesters. Students will receive credit for the capstones, as well as their grades, in the spring semester.

Each student's project must include a written submission and a presentation. The minimum length of the written submission is twenty pages. The presentation will take place in the spring semester, and will consist of a presentation of the project and questions and answers.

The Capstone course does not meet in formal class sessions. Several sessions will be scheduled in April for student presentations. Capstone students will be required to attend three sessions in addition to their own presentations.

## **FACULTY AND ATTORNEY SUPERVISION**

All capstone projects must have a faculty supervisor. Students must include the name of a faculty supervisor in their applications. The role of the faculty supervisor is to meet with the student and provide consultation throughout the course of the project and to provide input on the student's final grade. Students must meet with their respective faculty supervisors for no fewer than four sessions during the course of the project. Each meeting takes place immediately following a major project deadline. The first meeting should take place within two weeks of topic selection and should address the project and strategies for completing it. The second meeting should take place within two weeks of abstract submissions and should focus on the student's progress and development of the project's focus. The third meeting should take place within two weeks of submission of the rough draft and should focus on comments on the rough draft in anticipation of the student's presentation and completion of the final project. The fourth meeting is to prepare for the students' presentation.

Depending on the nature of the project, the student may also work with a practicing attorney who, in coordination with the faculty supervisor, will provide practical guidance and feedback over the course of the project.

## **GRADE**

The final grade for the capstone will be determined as follows:

- 85% Final paper/portfolio
- 10% Project presentation
- 5% Attendance and participation at three presentation sessions

## **ASSIGNMENTS AND DEADLINES**

Assignments are listed below. Unless otherwise noted, all submissions must be made via email by 5:00 p.m. on the dates listed below to your faculty supervisor, attorney supervisor (if applicable), and Courtney Patterson ([courtney.patterson@nyls.edu](mailto:courtney.patterson@nyls.edu)).

### **Thursday, September 1, 2011: Application due**

See the attached application form for more about the application process. Students will be notified by Tuesday, September 6 whether their project is approved.

### **Friday, September 23, 2011: First meeting confirmation**

Students must confirm by this date that they have completed the first faculty supervisor meeting. The purpose of the first meeting is to discuss the topic, plan for the project, and discuss the next steps, leading to submission of the abstract on October 28. Students should send an email to Courtney Patterson indicating the date and time of the completed meeting, cc:'ing the faculty supervisor.

**Friday, October 28, 2011: Abstract due**

The abstract should be approximately five pages in length and demonstrate significant topic development. The form of the abstract will vary depending on the type of project undertaken. For example, abstracts for projects that will result in a paper (e.g., amicus briefs, white papers, committee reports, *pro se* manuals, or law reform proposals) should demonstrate in-depth background study and substantive legal research, and should describe the nature of the problem addressed and the proposed solution(s). For students completing a portfolio of work for a social justice legal experience or a project in connection with a clinical course, the abstract should include a thorough description of the work (including the overall goals of the project and a description of any included assignments, such as briefs and memos) as well as significant research on relevant areas of law. By this point in the project's development, focus and structure should be clear from the abstract.

**Friday, November 11, 2011: Second meeting confirmation**

Students must confirm by this date that they have completed the second faculty supervisor meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the abstract and plan for the rough draft. Students should send an email to Courtney Patterson indicating the date and time of the completed meeting, cc:'ing the faculty supervisor.

**Friday, March 2, 2012: Rough draft due**

The rough draft should represent a substantially completed project. All areas addressed in the abstract should be thoroughly explored and explicated, and the bulk of research and writing completed. The faculty supervisor and the attorney supervisor (if applicable), will provide comments on the rough draft. Because of this, rough drafts should not include any significant incomplete sections; any incomplete section represents a substantial portion of the project that will not receive feedback, and as such seriously jeopardizes the final grade. Any work on the capstone subsequent to the rough draft should be primarily remedial in nature, taking into account comments received from faculty as well as any recent legal developments.

**Friday, March 16, 2012: Third meeting confirmation**

Students must confirm by this date that they have completed the third faculty supervisor meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the rough draft and plan for the final draft. Students should send an email to Courtney Patterson indicating the date and time of the completed meeting, cc:'ing the faculty supervisor.

**Friday, March 23, 2012: Presentation outline due**

The presentation will be approximately 20 minutes long with time for questions afterward. The best presentation does not describe the project in minute detail, but does place the project in the broader social justice context into which it fits and identifies and discusses the two or three most important parts of the project. The outline should reflect this. In addition, although visual presentations and/or handouts are not required, they are generally very helpful to the audience and preparing a visual aid will also help the presenter identify the most important parts of the project.

**Friday, April 6, 2012: Fourth meeting confirmation**

The student should confirm the meeting to discuss his/her outline with the faculty supervisor by this date by sending an email to Courtney Patterson, cc'ing the faculty supervisor.

**Monday, April 9–Friday, April 27, 2012: Presentations**

The presentations will take place during lunchtime and late afternoons. Students will be asked to identify any dates they cannot present. Attendance is mandatory at three presentation sessions in addition to the student's own presentation meeting. The presentation represents ten percent of the final grade. Attendance and participation in question-and-answer sessions constitute an additional five percent of the final grade. Students are required to invite their faculty supervisor and their attorney supervisor (if applicable) to their presentations at least two weeks prior to the presentation.

**Wednesday May 2, 2012: Final paper due.**

Students must submit their final papers to their supervising faculty member, supervising attorney (if applicable), and Courtney Patterson by email by 5:00 p.m. on May 2, 2012.