

## **Project Management: From Idea to Execution**

Columbia University GSAPP PLA6647

Spring 2024 | Session B | March 4 – April 15

412 Avery Hall

Mondays, 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

*\*NOTE: on Monday, 4/8 we will meet from 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM at a construction site*

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Office hours – generally right after class or by appointment

### **Course Description**

This practitioner-led course exposes students to fundamental project management concepts and the behavioral skills necessary to launch, lead, and execute projects across sectors. Planners, developers, designers, policy makers, and those working in adjacent fields are often in a position of leading, supporting, or influencing projects and initiatives with multiple moving pieces. Sometimes an individual is explicitly in control, whereas sometimes a project manager must achieve success without influence – and find ways to garner resources and stakeholder support from those not directly under their control. Skilled project managers oversee resources, schedules, scope, risks, and both internal and external factors to deliver positive results.

This course explores project management through the lens of affordable housing development, and how the skills required to advance projects through the various stages of the development cycle are transferrable across sectors. Students will explore project management through case studies, lectures, exercises, site visits, guest speakers, and live examples. Students can expect a combination of reading and hands-on exercises that develop tools to advance current and future projects. We will give special attention to controversial projects, operating in a resource-constrained environment, “managing up” as a project manager, and how a “360 degree” awareness of political, governmental, economic, social, and physical dynamics are critical to a project’s success. As a class, we will review causes of project failure and success, and risk mitigation during all phases of the project cycle.

This class is designed to be highly participatory, with in-class exercises, short individual assignments, and a group project. The best way of learning project management is by *doing*, and that is what we will endeavor to do together. Students will be expected to spend time together outside of class on group assignments and will be graded both by the instructor and via 360 peer reviews on their contributions to group projects.

### **Course goals**

This course aims to provide students with an overview of the basic concepts necessary to start and execute projects in today’s planning and development environment. Project management is a life-long practice, and it is impossible to become an expert within a seven- week timeframe. However, the tangible result of a student’s active participation in this class will be an understanding of project management principles, increased ability to work in teams, development of a project plan, and ability to navigate schedule, scope, budget, and risks. These skills will support students in coursework during the remainder of their time at the GSAPP and in future jobs.

### **Course Logistics and Policies**

#### Attendance

Successful project management depends upon you i) showing up, ii) participating in a way that demonstrates you are highly prepared, and iii) participating in a way that demonstrates you are highly engaged. I expect that you will apply these principles to class and arrive each week with your readings completed, assignments turned in, and ready to actively engage in class discussions and exercises.

All class members will be asked to sign in at the start of class. Both attendance and meaningful participation will be a factor of grading. You are expected to be at every class, and unexcused absences are not permitted. If you expect to miss class for religious observance or illness, please let me know in advance, in writing (email permissible). If you do miss class, please email letting me know why you were unable to attend. In these cases, it is your responsibility to obtain and learn the information that you missed.

### Electronic Devices

No other devices besides laptops will be permitted in class. I trust that during class, students are using computers for notes and assignments only, and staying focused on the class. If for any reason this is not the case, this policy may be revised.

### Homework Policy

You will have assignments due throughout the course, designed for your learning and professional growth. These include but are not limited to reading, individual reflections, and group assignments. Late assignments will not be considered for grades, though are recommended for completion as most assignments roll up into cumulative work throughout the course.

### Guest Lectures

While almost every project requires the same fundamentals to be managed well, each project has unique requirements, and every project manager approaches their work differently within the context of their operating environment. We are privileged in this course to have two guest lecturers join us, each with a different perspective to share. I expect that you will be ready with questions and take advantage of the opportunity to meet with these leaders in the field.

### Site Visit

We will visit an active construction site in Class #5. We will plan to meet at the site, so students should arrange transportation for themselves and arrive on time. Plan to wear boots or a sturdy shoe as the site may be muddy and uneven. Students must sign a waiver beforehand which I will provide.

### **Course Assignments and Grading**

Throughout the course, you will be evaluated on your completion of and participation in a variety of assignments and tasks. The course is designed like a real project, with readings and assignments that roll up to a final project and presentation, with reflection points along the way. Much like real projects, you will be working both in teams and individually, and your grade will reflect this as well.

Students will be responsible for:

- Readings These are due on or before class, so that you are prepared for lecture, discussion, and group work. All readings are designed to be practical, and estimated reading times are listed in the syllabus. All readings are available for download on Canvas; no textbooks are required.

- Preparation of two individual reflections These short narratives require you to respond to specific prompts and provide me with one page of thoughtful reflection. I seek your critical, honest questioning of your understanding of the material and the learning process.
- Attendance in class See aforementioned discussion.
- Discreet group assignments leading up to the final deliverable Starting in week 2, you will have team assignments due on a regular basis. These are all designed to inform your final team project and presentation.
- Request for Proposal “RFP” Response (submission and presentation) A written RFP submission and presentation will be due on the final day of class, which will represent the culmination of several assignments throughout the semester. Your team will present to a guest critic who will share their feedback and thoughtful questions. I will review and grade your final team report.
- 360 feedback on team members Project Management is like a team sport or an orchestra, and every member of the team has an important role to play. At the end of the semester, I will ask you to share holistic feedback on your team member’s performance, as well as your own.

**About the RFP Response.** Urban planning - whether that be development, policy, planning, architecture, economics, etc. - almost always happens in teams. Learning to effectively work in teams, and manage projects well as a team, is among the most important skills you will need upon graduation and working in the field. The RFP Response will ask you to work in groups of three to four class members, and to look at a real-life planning project with a defined scope. Each week, your team will be asked to submit a different part of the project, with components including a community outreach plan, team roles/responsibilities, project approach, budget, and schedule - all of the things that you would need to do in real life. Each assignment corresponds to a weekly topic. By the end of the course, students who actively participate will be able to apply the fundamentals of project management to an urban planning scenario. Your group’s final RFP submission should be approximately 25 – 30 pages.

Students grades will be based on:

- 15% - Attendance
- 25% - Participation
- 25% - Assignments (see allocation in the table below)
- 35% - RFP Response - Final Report and Presentation

The table below summarizes the individual and team assignments, with due dates and grade allocations. All assignments should be submitted to the class website unless otherwise noted.

Assignment	Due Date	% of total grade
<u>Assignment #1 (Individual)</u> Reflection on previous PM experience  <u>Assignment #2 (Team)</u> Site selection, RFP team roles and responsibilities, and RFP completion schedule	Sunday, March 17 by 12:00 PM	5%
<u>Assignment #3 (Team)</u> Key stakeholders and draft Tab H Community Engagement Plan	Sunday, March 24 by 12:00 PM	5%
<u>Assignment #4 (Team)</u> Submit draft pro forma, massing, and Draft Tab G Community Facility Plan	Sunday, March 31 by 12:00 PM	5%
<u>Assignment #5 (Team)</u> Submit 75% RFP draft and graphics package	Sunday, April 7 by 12:00 PM	5%
<u>RFP Response (Team)</u> Final RFP submission and presentations	Monday, April 14 at 11:00 AM	35%
<u>Assignment #6 (Individual)</u> Reflection on PM style and 360 team member assessment	Wednesday, April 17 by 5:00 PM	5%

## **Class Schedule, Exercises, and Assignments**

### **Class #1: Introduction and Course Overview**

Monday, March 4, 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Objectives Review class objectives and syllabus, instructor and student introductions, introduction to content and approach to course material, assign teams for the RFP Response and review the assignments in depth.

*You signed up for a class on Project Management - smart move! Project management is the art and science of “getting things done,” it is how individuals, groups, and organizations examine a project, policy, or issue and determine how to accomplish it. In today’s class, we will review the syllabus and course schedule and assignments, including what we aspire to cover during our time together. We will introduce ourselves and form teams that will be the basis of the RFP Response throughout the term.*

Format Introductions, review class objectives and syllabus, a brief case study, and RFP review and discussion.

**Spring Break: March 11 - 15. No class - enjoy your time off!**

### **Class #2: Fundamentals of Project Management**

Monday, March 18, 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Objectives Review fundamentals and best practices in project management through a lecture and case study.

*Project management is a learned set of skills, and an integrated tool kit that professionals use to manage their initiatives and daily workflow. Although a set of fundamental skills supports all effective project management, the act of managing a project is highly subjective and individualized. This class will cover key aspects of project management including scope, teamwork, resources (time, money, people), communication, and risk. With this foundation, students will be encouraged to begin developing their own style of project management. In addition to a lecture, we will discuss a case study that applies basic project management fundamentals.*

Format Lecture on project management fundamentals, discussion questions throughout.

#### Readings due

- Laufer, Alexander et al. What Successful Project Managers Do. MIT Sloan Management Review. 2015. (20 minutes)
- Dvir, Dov and Shenhar, Aaron J. What Great Projects have in Common. MIT Sloan Management Review, 2011. (5 minutes)
- Harvard Business Review Staff. Five Critical Roles in Project Management. Harvard Business Review. 2016. (5 Minutes)

- El-Gohary, Nora et al. Stakeholder Management for public private partnerships. Centre for Information Systems in Infrastructure & Construction, Department of Civil Engineering, University of Toronto. 2006.
- (Optional) Andrews, Matt et al. Building State Capability: Evidence, Analysis, Action: Chapter 9, Managing Your Authorizing Environment. 2017. (30 min)
- (Optional) Sutterfield, Scott et al. Case Study for Project and Stakeholder Management Failures. Project Management Journal. 2006. (20 minutes)
- (Optional) Urch Druskat, Vanessa and Wolff, Steven B. Building the Emotional Intelligence of Groups. Harvard Business Review. 2001. (20 minutes)

Assignments due (submitted at noon the day before class)

- Assignment #1: One page reflection on PM experience (Individual)
- Assignment #2: RFP site selection, team roles & responsibilities, completion schedule (Team)

**Class #3: Political Environment, Stakeholders, and Regulatory Agencies**

Monday, March 25, 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Objectives Identify the dynamics, systems, and communities that must align to make projects successful. Then complete an in-class exercise in which students must achieve a negotiated outcome for a hypothetical development site from either the developer or city government's perspective.

*In the first part of today's class, we will discuss the case study of the 2010 Chilean Mining Rescue (a departure from the general theme of this course but an excellent example of project management fundamental skills in action!). Then, we will turn back to affordable housing development. In order to execute a development plan, one must understand the existing political, cultural, and socioeconomic dynamics of the site. Then, one must determine how a proposed project interacts with those dynamics, both fitting within them and the degree to which it will alter the dynamics altogether. The government agencies and processes that regulate development must also be understood, managed, and harnessed in order to execute the development plan. When launching or running a project, it's critical to understand the authorizing environment. Who is in charge? What conditions are necessary for success both internally and externally? Who wins or loses by your project moving forward? Which stakeholders need to be involved? Today's class will involve an exercise with students seeking to achieve a negotiated outcome for a privately-owned development site.*

Format Case study on the Chilean Mining Rescue and a negotiation exercise.

Readings due

- The 2010 Chilean Mining Rescue (Part A & B). Harvard Business School Case Study. 2011. (45 min)

Assignment due (submitted at noon the day before class)

- Assignment #3: Key stakeholders and draft Tab H Community Engagement Plan

**Class #4: Scope and Cost-Benefit Analysis**

Monday, April 1, 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Objectives Learn how the issues that we discussed in Class #3 play out in Brooklyn District 33, from Council Member Lincoln Restler. Then, we will research a community district, assess its essential needs (the “scope of work”), and make recommendations based on the available budget.

*A project’s early scope of work is often aspirational - an exhaustive list of items needed to accomplish a project or set of initiatives. Over time, budget limitations reduce the amount of time and resources that can be dedicated to a project. Through cost-benefit analysis, a project manager is able to identify the key elements of the scope of work and value engineer costly items with limited return on investment. This exercise maximizes the project manager’s time and budget, and it occurs on projects both small and large. The first part of this class will explore how cost-benefit analysis occurs on a community level, from the perspective of the Council Member of Brooklyn District 33. Then, students will complete an exercise involving community research, analysis of key issues, drafting a policy brief, and presenting their work to the class.*

Format Guest lecture with Q & A, an exercise on scoping, and instructor feedback to groups about work submitted to date (if time allows).

Assignment due (submitted at noon the day before class)

- Assignment #4: Draft pro forma, massing, and community facility plan (Team)

### **Class #5: Risk Management**

Monday, April 8, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Objectives Meet in the Broadway Triangle neighborhood in Brooklyn and discuss the history and dynamics of the area, as well as the conditions that led to the current wave of development. Then visit a construction site – Throop Corners, a 140-unit, 8-story, Passive House, 100% electric new construction development - and hear from the construction manager leading the project.

*Every project is a living, breathing thing, managed by people, within changing organizations and shifting dynamics. Under the best circumstances, we experience consistency in a project schedule, budget, scope, and team. Under more typical circumstances, everything changes! These changes can put a project at risk – and good project managers are adept at risk management. How do you know what to consider as a project risk? How and when do you track risks, and what can you do to anticipate and mitigate risk? What considerations for risk change depending on sector (private, non-profit, government) or setting (domestic, international, rural or urban, developed or developing)? This case study will explore many of these questions based upon two real-life construction projects in the Broadway Triangle.*

Format Walking tour of the Broadway Triangle, site visit at Throop Corners, and Q & A with Elan Peskin, Project Manager at Mega Contracting.

Assignment due (submitted at noon the day before class)

- Assignment #5: Submit your team’s 75% RFP draft and graphics package

### **Class #6: Execution and Implementation**

Monday, April 15, 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Objectives Deliver presentations that communicate your development plans in a clear, concise, and professional manner.

*Congratulations! We made it to the end of the course. For second years who are graduating soon - I hope this course has prepared you to be an effective project manager in your first job post-grad. For first years - the skills and experience you gained through this course should serve you well in an internship and throughout your second year and thesis. Projects often culminate with a final deliverable after weeks, months, or years of work. Deliverables come in many forms - loan closings, contract signing, commissioning a building, approval to rezone a site, or submitting an RFP Response. Execution is a critical element of project management, and managers must persistently finish tasks throughout a project schedule to reach completion. Our final class will culminate with each group submitting their RFP Response and delivering presentations to a visiting critic who will provide feedback and ask clarifying questions. You will also turn in your 360 review of your team members.*

Format Teams will deliver 15-minute presentations outlining key aspects of their development plans to myself and Seth Bynum, Project Executive at Genesis Companies, followed by approximately 10 minutes of Q & A.

Assignments due

- RFP submission and presentations (Team)
- Assignment #6: One page reflection on your PM style and 360 team member assessment (Individual)
  - Submitted by 5:00 PM on Wednesday, April 19th