

**BOSTON UNIVERSITY**  
**COLLEGE OF GENERAL STUDIES**  
**TEAM S**  
**CAPSTONE 2019**

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE U.S. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES FOR SOLVING  
MAJOR PROBLEMS BEGINNING IN 2021**

The concept of a Capstone project is older than, and certainly not unique to, the College of General Studies at Boston University. A final research project has historically been considered the culmination of a liberal arts education. In addition to the historical and academic meanings of the term, there is an architectural sense to the word “capstone.” A capstone is the final block that is placed on top of a construction project to tie the whole structure together. Further, in the language of the building industry, each layer of brick is called a “course.” Therefore, it is appropriate to use the word “capstone” for our final project at the College since it will be the final stage of your education here, the last course that caps two years of study.

As you begin this project, keep three thoughts in mind. First, just as the construction of a building is not an individual effort, but rather a process requiring the labors of an organized group, so too is the Capstone project a group effort. You will be expected to work together for the success of your group. The more each individual gives to the group, the more each person will gain from the month’s work. When there is a genuine group effort, the final product will be better and the experience will be more rewarding. Second, the Capstone project is a kind of drama, requiring an act of imagination as you assume the roles of experts or advocates and present your findings in a real-world format. Third, the Capstone paper is not to be merely a fifty-page research term paper. Instead it should be a synthesis – a combining of separate elements to form a coherent whole. Research is, to be sure, an indispensable part of the project; but you will be expected in addition to construct arguments and to analyze and synthesize your research in order to make a proposal and justify your conclusions. In other words, research is more than gathering raw data as an end in itself. What is most important is the synthesis of these data into a meaningful whole which, if done properly, will be greater than the sum of its parts.

## OBJECTIVE

The person who takes the presidential oath of office in January 2021 and his or her advisers, along with the Congress of the United States, will confront many serious domestic and foreign policy challenges. The objective of the 2019 Team S Capstone project is to advise the candidates on how to deal most effectively with some of these challenges.

Specifically, the members of each Capstone group should select one of the topics presented in this syllabus, and then define the scope of their project in consultation with the Team S faculty. Each group's Capstone paper will present the current reality for the issue in focus, discuss changes (for better or worse) likely to occur between April 2019 and January 2021, and then develop a policy recommendation for the candidate who becomes President. (Students may or may not choose to direct their paper to one or more particular candidates.)

## MECHANICS OF THE CAPSTONE PROJECT

1. Groups: The Capstone project is a group project. The groups will be constructed according to criteria established by the Team S faculty. You will be a member of your group during the entire project. Each group will need to work out for itself some form of division of labor and responsibility. Each member of the group will be responsible not only to herself or himself, but to the other members as well.

2. Project Grades: You will receive one grade for the project as a whole. This grade will make up 25% of your semester grade in Social Science 202, Natural Science 202, and Humanities 202. There will be three components of your grade: the Capstone paper, the oral defense, and your individual participation in the project. You will be evaluated as a group on the Capstone paper (in other words each member of the group will receive the same paper grade), but as individuals on the oral defense and participation. Thus, each individual will be evaluated on the paper, his or her performance during the oral defense, and his or her participation in the total project. Your overall Capstone grade will be a combination of these three components. (Note: While Capstone groups will not receive written comments on their papers, the faculty team will provide each group with substantial verbal feedback during the oral defense.)

3. Reporting of Capstone Grades: Faculty do not assign individual Capstone grades until all oral defenses have been completed. **All individual Capstone grades will be posted electronically no earlier than Friday, May 10.** You will receive only your overall Capstone grade as this is what constitutes 25% of your grade in each course.

4. The Capstone Paper: The length of the Capstone paper should be no more than 50 pages (typed, double-spaced, 12-point font). The 50-page limit does not include preliminary pages (table of contents, etc.) or endnotes, bibliography, and appendices. Bound copies of the

paper must be provided for each faculty member. Also, each member of the group needs a copy in order to prepare for, and participate in, the oral defense.

5. The Oral Defense: After the Capstone paper has been submitted to the faculty, your group will meet at an appointed time to defend its work before your team faculty. The oral defense usually lasts about two hours. Each group member should be prepared to answer questions on all aspects of the paper.

6. The Project Schedule: The project will begin with the Team S Capstone Kickoff on Friday, March 29 and continue until Friday, May 10. This period of time will be subdivided as follows:

a. The weeks of April 1 and April 8 are for scheduled meetings with faculty, Capstone group meetings, intensive research, and (toward the end of the second week) beginning the writing of the paper.

b. The week of April 15 should be used for additional conferences with faculty as needed, completing any remaining research, and writing and editing the paper.

c. The week of April 22 should be devoted entirely to editing, proofreading, reproducing, and binding the written report.

d. The written report is **DUE at 12:15 P.M. on FRIDAY, APRIL 26. THERE WILL BE NO EXTENSIONS.** Members of all Team S and other Capstone groups are required to be present in Jacob Sleeper Auditorium at 12:15 P.M. on Friday, April 26, at which time all Capstone papers will be collected by faculty teams.

e. There will then follow two weeks, those of April 29 and May 6, during which oral defenses for all Team S groups will be scheduled. Scheduling of oral defenses is handled by the faculty team.

7. Sources: Be certain that the Internet and printed sources you utilize are legitimate and credible. The Team S faculty will instruct each group on the proper citation system for the group's topic.

8. Statement on Plagiarism: As defined by *Webster's New World Dictionary*, to plagiarize is "to take (ideas, writings, etc.) from another and pass them off as one's own." Since students are often confused about the use of quotation marks, the faculty has established the general rule that whenever five consecutive words are copied from another author, the words must be presented within quotation marks; failure to do so is plagiarism. Students should note that the sources of ideas and thoughts, even when paraphrased in one's own words and expressed in what is commonly called an indirect quotation, must be credited.

## **THE GROUP'S IDENTITY**

Each Capstone group is charged with the task of formulating a policy recommendation on an issue that is drawn from one of the topics presented in this syllabus. For that purpose, the group should assume an appropriate identity, such as an independent panel of experts or a committee of former or current government officials. Operating under this identity, the group should survey the history and the scope of the issue it is studying, should consider the various serious policy options, and should recommend to the presidential candidates what it determines to be the best alternative. The group will consider the ethical, philosophical, social, domestic political, international security, scientific, and technological implications of the chosen problem and of the proposed policy. Policy proposals should reflect careful research and clear thinking.

## **THE WRITTEN REPORT: POLICY RECOMMENDATION FORMAT**

You will set yourselves up as an entity that is charged with investigating a specific problem and will through your investigation develop a realistic recommendation as a solution to the problem beginning in 2021. Your paper should follow these general guidelines:

A. Introduction: Clearly state the problem you are investigating, why it is important to investigate this problem, and to whom you will be presenting your policy recommendation. Your introduction should make readers realize the nature of the problem and why a solution is needed.

B. Discussion and Development of the Problem: This section of the paper should provide background information on the problem and present data on all its important aspects. Do not merely outline the research you have done on the issue, but present data that draw together all elements of your research and help to explain the controversy that makes your topic a problem. This section organizes and presents data that:

- (1) outline and develop the problem;
- (2) develop the various competing aspects of and approaches to the problem; and
- (3) help direct you toward, and are necessary to support, your policy recommendation.

C. The Recommendation: Your recommendation should be a logical outcome of the background and data you presented in Section B. It may be a recommendation that has already been proposed (which you discovered during your research), it may combine various aspects of different published proposals, or it may be an entirely original solution. This section should reiterate what data support your recommendation and explain why your recommendation is superior to others. You should also be careful to indicate what values (ethical, social, scientific) you used to develop your recommendation. Is your recommendation a realistic, workable solution that you can expect to be taken seriously, or is it a utopian, pie-in-the-sky proposal? You should discuss how your recommendation will be implemented. You must consider the cost (how much and to whom) of the implementation of your proposal. Finally, you should argue the

functional effects of your recommendation. Who will benefit from your proposal: particular individuals and groups? the people of the United States? people in other countries? people throughout the world? Is your recommendation a long-term solution or a short-term fix? A major objective is not to sit on the fence with your proposal, but to declare a coherent position and be able to defend it.

## **FOCUSING YOUR RESEARCH**

After your group selects a major topic area, you should consider some of the following questions and advice to help focus your research:

1. What specific problem do you want to examine? A word of caution: Do not be too broad. You must define a problem that is manageable in scope within the framework of the Capstone project. The advice of your faculty can be especially helpful in this regard.
2. Investigate your problem from a historical perspective. Include any pertinent background information you come across.
3. What is the current range of thinking about your issue? What are the various serious alternative solutions to the problem you are investigating? You should identify opposing views about the issue and become familiar with the debate surrounding it. This approach lends more credibility to your eventual policy proposals.
4. Your group may select one of the alternative solutions you encounter in your research, or you may create an alternative you believe is superior to any suggested in the available literature. In determining your solution, you should draw upon your knowledge of ethics to help justify the ends you seek to attain and the means you propose to employ.
5. How would your policy be implemented?
6. What are the implications of your recommendations? What are the domestic political, international security, economic, social, cultural, philosophical, and scientific ramifications of your proposals?

## **E-PORTFOLIO ASSIGNMENT**

As part of the Capstone project, you need to set up a "Capstone" tab on your Digication e-Portfolio site and keep a record of your work on the project. Your e-Portfolio can be a good tool for keeping track of your progress on the project, and it can also be useful in determining your participation. Specifically:

1. Keep a weekly log of your individual contributions to the project (discuss the books

and articles you have read, discuss the drafts you have written, list the group meetings you have attended, etc.).

2. Cut and paste all drafts you have written into the Capstone tab of your e-Portfolio. Include even the drafts that do not make the group's final cut.

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## TOPICS

### 1. MANDATORY VACCINATIONS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In 1796, the smallpox vaccine was developed by Edward Jenner. It was the first successful vaccine to be developed, and by 1980 smallpox was eradicated from the human population through vaccination. According to the World Health Organization, vaccines prevent 2-3 million deaths annually from 26 diseases worldwide. Despite this success in preventing infectious diseases, vaccines have become a hot-button issue for many people. All 50 states have laws requiring children who attend public school to be vaccinated against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio, measles, rubella, and varicella (chicken pox), but there are ways for parents to opt out due to medical, religious, or philosophical (personal) reasons. In 2015, amid much controversy, California passed Senate Bill 277 (SB277). This bill removed personal belief exemptions from vaccination requirements for private and public schools as well as day care centers, making California one of the hardest places in which to “opt out.”

The MMR vaccine, which protects against measles, mumps, and rubella, has been the biggest target of anti-vaccination campaigns due to a study published in *the Lancet* in 1998. In this study, the author, a physician named Andrew Wakefield, claimed a causative link between the MMR vaccine and autism. However, this study was later shown to be fraudulent, and was retracted in 2010. Unfortunately, Wakefield’s paper is still used as evidence that vaccines are linked to autism, despite that fact that numerous other studies with thousands of children have shown no link between vaccines and autism.

What national policy (if any) should be in place regarding vaccinations? Should public health measures like vaccines take precedence over individual liberties for the “greater good”?

### 2. THE CONSTITUTIONALITY OF PROLONGED SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

Former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy once quoted the great Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky in one of his written opinions: “The degree of civilization in a

society can be judged by entering its prisons.” Critics of American prison conditions have long advocated for major prison reform. Those efforts met with significant (even if partial) success when the FIRST STEP Act (originally titled the “Prison Reform and Redemption Act”) was signed into law by President Donald Trump in December of 2018. This significant piece of criminal justice legislation met with broad bipartisan support in Congress. It is estimated that well over 50,000 prisoners (out of more than 180,000 current inmates in the federal system) will be positively affected by the law over the next decade (though the legislation does not cover state jails and prisons that account for a majority of the U.S. prison population). The First Step Act includes measures to improve prison conditions, greater flexibility for judges in sentencing, and, perhaps most importantly, shorter minimum sentences for non-violent criminals and earlier release for prisoners who earn “good-time credit.”

The law also bans juveniles from being held in solitary confinement in federal prisons. But it does not ban the use of solitary confinement for all prisoners in all prisons. Over the past half-decade, there has been increased debate over the constitutionality of the very use of prolonged solitary confinement. Justice Kennedy was a vehement critic of the extended isolation of prisoners, questioning whether such a policy constitutes “cruel and unusual punishment” and is therefore in violation of the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. For your project, extensively research this controversial issue by looking at the legal debate as well as recent psychological and sociological research dealing with solitary confinement. Consult expert sources and be sure to examine both sides of the debate, including the reasons why prolonged solitary confinement has been used in the past.

### **3. THE UNITED STATES AND IRAN: NUCLEAR AND OTHER ISSUES**

Throughout most of the Cold War, Iran was a major ally of the United States in a vital area of the world. But the overthrow of Iran’s pro-American regime by a theocratic and virulently anti-American revolutionary movement early in 1979 generated an intensely and enduringly hostile relationship between the two countries. Of greatest U.S. concern since the 1990s has been the radical Shiite Iranian regime’s nuclear weapons program.

President Barack Obama’s approach to the expansionist Iranian theocracy – signaled clearly by his refusal to side with the freedom-seeking Iranian Green Movement in 2009 – was to conciliate and to negotiate. In July 2015, with Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry leading the way, the United States, Russia, Great Britain, France, China, and Germany arranged with Iran the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), also known as the U.S.-Iran nuclear deal. The JCPOA went into effect despite the opposition of a majority of the American people (as measured by public opinion polls) and majorities in both houses of Congress, as President Obama declared it was not a treaty (which would have required ratification by two-thirds of the Senate), and a Democratic filibuster prevented the Senate from formally recording its rejection of the agreement.

In May of 2018, President Donald Trump gave notification that the United States was abandoning the JCPOA and reimposed strong economic sanctions on Iran. But Trump’s opposition to Iran’s regional aggression has not been coherent. While applauding Israeli and

Saudi military actions against Iranian and Iranian-backed forces in Syria and Yemen, respectively, Trump has announced an impending total withdrawal from Syria of U.S. military personnel stationed there, which (as he has been informed by national security experts) will inevitably strengthen Iran's regional position and encourage its ambitions.

What should be the U.S. approach to Iran beginning in 2021? What strategy or strategies would be most likely to succeed in countering Iran's regional ambitions and in blocking the development by Iran of nuclear weapons? Also, should the United States support those within Iran who are fighting for freedom against an oppressive, theocratic regime, and if so, how?

#### **4. HARM REDUCTION AND THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC**

“Harm reduction” is a term used to describe a set of strategies and ideas aimed at mitigating negative effects of drug use. It focuses on enacting positive change, and working with drug users without judgment, coercion, or discrimination, and without requiring that they stop using drugs as a precondition of support. Social services and programs that fall under the category of harm reduction include safe injection sites, needle exchange programs, overdose prevention and reversal, counseling, and providing education about safer drug use.

While many states have needle exchange programs, only two cities in the United States (Seattle and Philadelphia) have approved safe injection facilities for IV drug users. These facilities provide clean needles, and have trained staff on hand to administer naloxone in the case of an overdose. In addition, they provide HIV testing, wound care, and information about substance abuse treatment programs. Advocates for safe injection sites say the facilities save lives, reduce stigma, and fall under the approach of harm reduction for tackling the opioid epidemic. But critics say the sites encourage drug use and bring crime to the surrounding neighborhoods, and efforts should be focused more on treatment and prevention. Here in Massachusetts, there is a currently a bill under debate that would let state health officials permit safe injection sites. The bill has been met with much opposition and controversy.

Candidates in the 2020 election will need to address the opioid epidemic that our country is facing. Are harm reduction approaches like safe injection facilities part of the solution? What is your policy recommendation for cities that are considering implementing safe injection facilities or other harm reduction programs?

#### **5. NATIONAL MONUMENTS AND THE ANTIQUITIES ACT**

The Antiquities Act, signed into law by Theodore Roosevelt in 1906, states that Congress delegates power to the President for the protection of “objects of historic and scientific interest.” This law resulted from concerns that these features, primarily found in geologically and ecologically interesting locations and sometimes including prehistoric Native American ruins, were subject to abuse or exploitation by individuals and corporations. Many environmentalists have praised the application of the Antiquities Act (by almost every President since Roosevelt) in helping to preserve biodiversity, protect natural wonders, and combat the dangers of climate

change.

Prior to the end of his presidential term, along with creating or expanding several major monuments, President Barack Obama designated the Bears Ears National Monument in Utah, protecting 1.3 million acres of land that several mining companies have been eager to drill for natural gas. This designation drew loud protest from Utah's governor and other local political leaders who had been working on a state bill to protect a smaller designated area while still permitting extraction of natural resources. On April 26, 2017, President Donald Trump signed an executive order that directs a review of the Antiquities Act, with the proposed purpose of examining the designation of national monuments from the past twenty years to determine if prior Presidents had overstepped their authority in creating such protected areas. In December of 2017, President Trump ordered that the size of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah be reduced by almost half, prompting lawsuits related to his power to implement such an executive order.

Two cases have reached the U.S. Supreme Court, and the U.S. Congress has twice reduced the power of the President to create or expand monuments in the states of Wyoming and Alaska by requiring congressional consent for such actions. With this in mind, carefully examine the recent debates occasioned by the current administration's review of the Antiquities Act. Explore such issues as local opposition to federal designations, the economic and environmental value of the given monument and its natural resources, etc. Drawing upon your research, create a policy platform moving ahead.

## **6. FIGHTING BACK AGAINST RUSSIA**

The Gorbachev-Yeltsin era of a pro-Western Russian foreign policy ended at the turn of the century when Vladimir Putin became Russia's leader. Putin views the United States as an adversary and has conducted a foreign policy aimed at undermining the interests of the United States.

Putin's aggressive, anti-U.S. foreign policy has been successful in numerous ways. While the United States was acting hesitantly and ineffectively, Putin acted forcefully and brutally and during the past few years has gained for Russia a dominant position in Syria. In December 2018 President Donald Trump bolstered Russia's dominance by announcing the impending withdrawal from Syria of all U.S. military forces stationed in that country. In 2014 Russia took Crimea from Ukraine, and ever since that time has been supporting military action against Ukraine's government; limited economic sanctions imposed by the United States and other nations have had little discernible impact on Putin's policy toward Ukraine. And Putin's actions over the years have served to strengthen Iran's capacity to advance its nuclear program and to engage in regional aggression in opposition to the interests of the U.S.

Over the past few years, another issue has taken center stage. Russian cyberwarfare during the U.S. presidential election campaign in 2016, aimed at aiding the candidacy of Donald Trump and damaging the prospects of Hillary Clinton, has been established by U.S. intelligence agencies and other investigators beyond any reasonable doubt. Russia's operations were definitely conducted with the active collaboration of Trump's top campaign associates and very

likely with the support of Trump himself – Special Prosecutor Robert Mueller has been investigating this matter – and for certain these operations were sophisticated and far-reaching. Yet President Trump and his most devoted defenders continue to refuse to acknowledge this problem. Instead, in July 2018 the President, who has a bizarre and suspicious affinity for Putin (while disliking the leaders of many NATO countries), endorsed Putin’s “very strong and powerful denials” of Russia’s extremely well-documented activities designed to help him win the presidency.

Assuming that Russia does not succeed in engineering the re-election of Trump in 2020, what should be done by the next President to counter Russia’s ongoing efforts to undermine the integrity of elections in the United States? And what should be done to thwart Russia’s current aggression and possible future aggression in Syria and against Ukraine and front-line NATO countries? Your Capstone group could evaluate U.S. policy toward Russia as a whole or, alternatively, could focus in depth either on the cyberwarfare issue or on the challenge of Russian military aggression.

## **7. CONSERVATION SPENDING DECISIONS: WHICH SPECIES SHOULD BE SAVED?**

More than 26,000 species worldwide are threatened with extinction; in the United States there are 1,500 species listed as “endangered” or “threatened.” With limited funding available to help all these species, the question arises: Should people try to save every population or species, or should resources be focused on species that stand a better chance of survival or are more critical to ecosystems? Conservation spending is influenced not only by how close a species is to extinction, but also by pressures from lobbyists and the public. Large amounts of money are often spent on more charismatic species, while other lesser-known species that could be saved at a lower cost get little attention. In addition, some species are still declining despite receiving sufficient funding.

A recent article in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences addressed this issue in 2016, suggesting “conservation triage” as a solution: <https://www.pnas.org/content/113/13/3563>. Critics of the paper say that the idea of “triage” undermines support for species protection, and that the guidelines for which species to focus on are too rigid.

What would be your policy recommendation to the 2020 presidential candidates on how to allocate funding for saving endangered species? What factors should be taken into consideration when making these funding decisions?

## **8. CLIMATE CHANGE AND FEDERAL RESPONSIBILITY: WHO PAYS?**

The likelihood that human-caused climate change will lead to more violent weather and increased coastal erosion will force Americans to reconsider who should pay to clean up the mess wrought by the burning of fossil fuels. For most of American history, major storms were

considered “acts of God.” The typical response was for insurance companies to finance rebuilding efforts. More recently, the federal government has played a major role in reconstruction, primarily through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Climate change, however, alters that calculation. While we may not be able to attribute a specific storm to human-caused climate change (although a growing number of scientists believe that we can), virtually all climatologists agree that we have already begun to confront increasingly extreme weather in the form of heat waves, intense precipitation events, and more powerful hurricanes. The paradoxical combination of floods and droughts will damage rural communities, farms, and livelihoods, while storm surges fueled by higher sea levels threaten large coastal cities. Massive storms, however, are not the sole concern for communities confronting climate change. It is likely that sea-level rise associated with global warming will hasten beach erosion in low-lying areas such as Florida, New Jersey, and Cape Cod, leading to what the environmental philosopher Rob Nixon has dubbed “the slow violence” of ecological damage. Rising sea levels can also result in the possible contamination of nearby sources of drinking water (such as the Cape Cod aquifer, a massive underground water source that has already been subjected to various forms of contamination over prior decades, leading to health risks).

Who should pay? For this topic you will have to address matters of science, including the difference between a “natural disaster” and one caused by climate change. More specifically, you will need to address public policy and questions of basic fairness. Questions you might consider include: Should homeowners be allowed to rebuild along vulnerable beaches? Should communities that do not take proper steps to mitigate the effects of climate change be held liable for property damage? Should we place limitations on agricultural activity in regions expected to experience increased drought? Should cities and towns be expected to pay for new sewer systems to handle more powerful floods and storms? Do the owners of power plants and automobile manufacturers share liability for damage attributable to the release of carbon dioxide?

## **9. U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS**

*The New Yorker* magazine’s January 8, 2018, edition features an article by Evan Osnos titled “Making China Great Again.” Osnos argues that President Donald Trump’s China policy is undermining long-standing American interests regarding China and East Asia. Since defeating Japan in World War II, the United States has maintained a formidable military presence and has played a major economic role in the Pacific region. Changes initiated by Trump have generated grave concerns among the United States’ traditional East Asian allies. “As Donald Trump surrenders America’s global commitments,” Osnos concludes, “Xi Jinping is learning to pick up the pieces.” And in an article titled “The China Reckoning: How Beijing Defied American Expectations” in the March-April 2018 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Kurt M. Campbell and Ely Ratner observe similarly that “many of Donald Trump’s policies – a narrow focus on bilateral trade deficits, the abandonment of multilateral trade deals, the questioning of the value of alliances, and the downgrading of human rights and diplomacy – have put Washington at risk of

adopting an approach that is confrontational without being competitive.” Tariffs imposed by Trump on Chinese exports to the United States have been very damaging to U.S. corporations and farmers alike, necessitating large U.S. government payments to victimized farmers (most of whom voted for Trump in 2016) and a disorderly system by which “exemptions” can be granted to U.S. corporations to shield Chinese suppliers from Trump’s tariffs in order to reduce the corporations’ costs of production.

Assuming that Trump will not fundamentally alter his foreign policy, what should the next U.S. President do to restore a stronger U.S. position in U.S.-China relations? Your Capstone group could evaluate U.S. policy toward China as a whole or, alternatively, could focus in depth on one important issue, such as U.S. trade policy or how the United States should address the challenge of China’s military buildup and regional assertiveness.

## **10. THE RISE OF ANTIBIOTIC-RESISTANT “SUPERBUGS”**

Since the discovery of penicillin in 1928, antibiotics have been viewed as miracle drugs for combating bacterial infections. Antibiotics were one of the major public health achievements of the twentieth century, and they have drastically decreased the number of deaths from infectious diseases worldwide. Nevertheless, key bacterial pathogens are becoming increasingly resistant to existing antibiotics. This rise of the so-called “superbugs” is a growing public health issue that needs to be addressed. A major factor contributing to the increase in bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics is misuse and overuse of these drugs. In addition, pharmaceutical companies are cutting back on research and development of new antibiotics because such efforts are not as cost-effective as developing medications for chronic conditions like heart disease and diabetes.

What policy changes should be proposed to address the issue of antibiotic resistant bacteria? Should the government step in to develop new antibiotics if pharmaceutical companies won’t? Or should incentives be given to private industry to develop new antibiotics? And what steps can be taken to prevent the misuse of antibiotics, both nationally and worldwide?

## **11. PRIVATE VS. PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF WATER SOURCES**

The water contamination disaster in Flint, Michigan, has evoked deep concerns and debates over the issue of available water. Water supplies have dwindled because of over-use as well as the pollution and contamination of natural sources. There is currently a fierce competition among certain large companies to buy up many, if not most, of the world’s remaining sources of drinking water. In America, companies like Nestlé and Coca-Cola have set up operations in many states, purchasing extraction rights to water that had previously been considered a public and local resource. In many cases, these companies pay only minimal fees to extract water from publicly owned lands. Such is the case in Michigan, where Nestlé also won an important recent court appeal against opposition groups concerned with the depletion of water supplies. It is also the case in states such as Maine and Texas, where water regulation rules are

not all that strict. Nestlé recently won as well a four-years-long court case to extract water from an otherwise public source in Fryeburg, Maine (for the supply of its Poland Spring waters brand). In some states such as California, Nestlé has paid the U.S. Forest Service very low fees in order to extract tens of millions of gallons of water from federal lands.

Not surprisingly, there is a growing grassroots resistance against this trend to privatize what many believe is a public good. But many have also argued that the question of privatization of water sources should be left to free market competition and that such privatization might also help communities gain revenue to deal with the massive financial burden of replacing highly aged infrastructure. In fact, some communities have not merely partnered with private corporations but turned over their water supply management systems to such companies. Does the public have a right to vital freshwater sources in given areas, or should the free market determine whether companies can compete for the purchase of these sources (or, at the very least, for extraction rights)? Is drinking water a public or private good? Who should own vital freshwater sources?

## **12. DEALING WITH NORTH KOREA: A ROGUE STATE WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

The North Korean nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs have long been perceived as a serious danger to the United States, to South Korea and other U.S. allies in the East Asian region, and to the international community more generally. In the words of Nicholas Eberstadt (“The Method in North Korea’s Madness: A Monstrous Regime’s Rational Statecraft,” *Commentary*, February 2018), for more than fifty years North Korea “has been the most exceptionally and unwaveringly militarized country on the face of the planet.” During the reign of the late Kim Jong Il (1994-2011), North Korea conducted three long-range missile tests and detonated two atomic bombs. Since 2011, under the leadership of Kim Jong Un (the son of one of Kim Jong Il’s mistresses), the pace of missile and nuclear development has accelerated, with, so far, more than a dozen launches of long-range missiles and numerous nuclear tests. There is no doubt that North Korea – a brutally oppressive country with a totalitarian government that flagrantly disregards its citizens’ human rights – now possesses at least a small arsenal of nuclear bombs.

Regarding North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs, the direct security danger to the United States is the foremost concern. Also, based on the past behavior of the North Korean regime, including its collaboration with Iran on long-range missile advancements, the U.S. government is worried that nuclear material might be sold by North Korea to a terrorist group or to another rogue state.

The unpredictable President Donald Trump initially derided Kim Jong Un publicly as “little rocket man” and threatened to unleash “fire and fury” against North Korea. Strong sanctions on North Korea were imposed by the United Nations Security Council in 2017 on America’s initiative. Then Trump changed his mind and held a face-to-face meeting with Kim Jong Un in Singapore in June 2018, announcing at the conclusion that he had gained Kim’s

commitment to total North Korean denuclearization.

Since that time, U.S. and international intelligence agencies have determined that North Korea is not denuclearizing, but rather is continuing to develop its increasingly lethal nuclear arsenal. Trump, however, desperate for an international “victory,” has been delusional about this reality, insisting that North Korean denuclearization is occurring and that Kim (who is undoubtedly amazed by how easy it is for him to manipulate Trump through false flattery) “likes” and “respects” him and that they have a “great relationship.” However, after a second Trump-Kim meeting took place in Vietnam in late February 2019, the charade of denuclearization could not be easily sustained amidst the actuality (clearly recognized by Trump’s leading foreign policy advisers) of a serious and growing danger.

What will likely be the situation in January 2021, and what will be the realistic options for the person who takes the oath of office at that time? Will the result of Trump’s ego-driven inept diplomacy be that the next President has to accommodate himself or herself to a nuclear North Korea? Could severe economic sanctions still potentially succeed in forcing the abandonment by North Korea of its nuclear weapons? Is there a viable U.S. military option for dealing with this problem? Would a very destructive but victorious war in the near future be preferable to accepting a situation where North Korea is able to threaten the United States permanently with nuclear devastation?

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## SUMMARY

We have presented you with a detailed syllabus designed to serve as a guideline for the Capstone project. Remember, these pages are only a syllabus, nothing more. You are not expected simply to read this document and be able to go off and produce a Capstone report. The Team S faculty are to serve as your ultimate directors. Your professors are there to guide you through this venture in an attempt to make the Capstone a productive and profitable learning experience.

If you are feeling slightly overwhelmed at this point, relax. Legions of former Boston University sophomores have successfully completed their Capstone projects. It may be helpful to take a moment to consider that the process of putting together a Capstone paper can be condensed into five tasks:

- (1) Identify the problem that you will be investigating.
- (2) Gather pertinent evidence and arguments pertaining to this problem, being careful to examine the various sides of the issue.
- (3) Based on this research, formulate a recommendation.
- (4) Determine the implications of your recommendation.
- (5) Bring this work together in your written report.