

**Brigham Young University**  
**Political Science 391: Advanced Seminar on Current Issues**  
**Winter 2010**

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Office hours: Tuesdays, 5-8 p.m.

### **Course Objectives**

This course is required of all participants in the Washington Seminar. It is designed to help you understand how Washington D.C. works. There are two components to your internship—your personal experience in your internship; and information from experts, both in person and in print, about major national and international concerns. This class addresses the latter. The overarching goal of the course is to learn how public policy is shaped. You will have the unique opportunity to listen to first-hand accounts from government and non-government officials who participate in the policy-making process, formally and informally. After this experience, you will understand the political process better and (hopefully) be motivated to actively participate in your community, state, and even at the national level in the political process of policy making.

The class will be conducted primarily on Fridays during your stay in Washington: Reserve all day Friday for class. Each Friday we will have three sessions (as a general rule)—class with the instructor and two briefings with political practitioners—either at the Barlow Center or on location at the office or agency of the person offering the briefing. Some weeks we may have a briefing on a weekday evening to suit the schedule of the briefer.

The general themes highlighted will be:

Who shapes policy and how?

What makes advocacy successful/influential?

What are major issues which our country faces, both at home and abroad?

In order to make the most of these opportunities, you will prepare carefully for each briefing and think critically about the experience after the fact.

### **Readings**

Required readings will be chosen week by week in preparation for each topic and guest speaker. They will be distributed via email.

Current Events/Washington Post To help you achieve our course objectives you will regularly follow the news through the *Washington Post*. Students are therefore *required to read a major national newspaper each weekday*. Many of you will have copies of the *Washington Post*

available to you at your workplace. You may also read it on the Internet. However, keep in mind that some articles in the print edition may not be available in the online edition. Other suggested newspapers with excellent coverage of American politics include: *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

## **Course Requirements**

Most writing assignments are due on Friday morning at the beginning of the meetings unless otherwise indicated. All deadlines are firm and non-negotiable. Grades will be reduced 10% for each day an assignment is late. Arrange your schedule to meet these deadlines. If you have an emergency, email me the assignment (as a single attachment), and slide a hard copy under my office door later.

### Class Attendance and Participation

Attendance and *quality* participation are essential to the success of this class. Roll will be taken each week and students will be penalized for absences and lack of preparation and quality participation. Only absences due to illness or work *required* by your internship supervisor are excused. Work related absences will be rare and must be cleared with me in advance.

The following are not excused absences: *choosing* to go to your internship, job interviews, family events (including visits from parents, but they can join us for the briefings), excursions or out-of-town trips, and alternative briefing opportunities. *You should not schedule anything before mid-afternoon on Fridays, and before doing so, check to make sure we do not have a late briefing scheduled.*

You are also required to attend the talk of the Barlow Center Speaker during the semester, which takes place on a weekday evening at the Barlow Center.

### Pre-briefing Reading Responses

Reading responses are due Thursday mornings at 8 a.m. by email. I will assign readings to (1) help us think about the topics addressed in the briefings; (2) help you prepare for writing assignments. Sometimes these readings will be general and sometimes specific.

For each reading, write a paragraph that shows your independent, critical thought. This can take (at least) one of the following four forms:<sup>1</sup>

1. **Intra-class connection.** Example: This reading reminded me of the earlier reading by.... The connection I see is.... This author reads the evidence differently because....
2. **Cross-curriculum connections.** Example: This reading got me thinking about a similar problem last semester in my economics class....
3. **Data connections.** Example: This reading implied that all politicians are corrupt, yet *The Washington Post* on Wednesday carried a story about a Senator who was retiring to spend more time with her family, calling into question the author's initial assumption....

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<sup>1</sup> These suggestions are taken roughly from Professor Daniel Nielson's syllabus.

4. **Puzzlement.** Example: This reading argued that proposed policy changes should be narrowly focused. But we read something earlier by the same author that said to make a proposed change successful, it must attract a large audience of support. How can these both be right?

After your paragraphs on each reading, write down one interesting fact obtained from a Google (or other) search about each briefer beyond the information I provide you. And finally, write down one question that you could pose in each briefing. Most weeks, we have 3 readings and 2 briefings. Thus, your reading response will usually have 3 paragraphs on the readings, 2 sentences of interesting facts, and 2 questions you could pose.

Send the response via email by **Thursday at 8 a.m.** ([goodliffe@byu.edu](mailto:goodliffe@byu.edu)). Send the response in the body of the email, not as an attachment. Even though it will probably be on your email heading, include your name and date in the body of the email as well. A clear subject heading would also be helpful, such as, “WS: RR 1/8.” It would be a good idea to bring a hard copy of your email along to the briefing.

### First Paper: The Founders and Contemporary Government

*Compare and contrast* the current federal government’s *size and powers* with what the Founders imagined when drafting the Constitution. Use material from the readings, the Constitution Center, the Independence Hall tour, and the presentations (at the Freedoms Foundations and other places) to form your image of the Founders’ state of mind in 1789. Then compare their original intent to current practice as you know it. You should focus on a few (e.g. three) elements that you explore in detail. Outside research is not necessary to complete this assignment, but better papers will show evidence of research. Other notes: This paper is not about what a specific Founder wanted, it is about what the Founders expected. This paper is also *not* about what the current federal government’s size and powers *should* be, whether your opinion or others. The paper should be 1200-1500 words, or about 4-5 pages, double-spaced.

### Second Paper: Public Service and My Career Choices

Brigham Young said, “It is the duty of a Saint of God to gain all the influence he can on this earth, and to use every particle of that influence to do good” (1869, [JD 12:376](#)). *How do you plan on doing good in your life?* One of the purposes of the briefings (and your internship) is to expose you to a wide array of careers in public service, so that you learn that there are a variety of ways to be involved as a citizen, and to inform your own personal career selection. Many of our guest speakers weigh career benefits of salary, job security, and social status against family and church responsibilities. Consider what matters most to you in a career (e.g. salary, job security, social status, family time, intellectual challenge, making a difference). How will your life and career include public service (e.g. informed voting, community service, having a voice on vital issues, working for the government, running for public office)? Draw on the readings, briefings, and internship experiences. Other notes: Remember to keep this paper analytical, and not a journal entry. Do not take me through your thought process (or stream of consciousness): “At first, I thought this.... Then, I realized that....” You may use first person. The paper should be 1200-1500 words, or about 4-5 pages, double-spaced.

## Final Paper

Identify a problem confronting your local community, state, or the nation, and *propose how you will get the government to solve the problem*. First, generally discuss why some people or groups are more effective at influencing government (e.g. bureaucracy, legislature, courts) than others. Using readings and the briefings, identify three or four factors that increase the odds of being influential. You can illustrate these factors using examples drawn from readings, briefings, or current events (the *Post*). Second, your paper should state the specifics of the problem you wish to solve without spending more than a page explaining why it is a problem. Third, much of your paper should explain the nuts and bolts of your plan for achieving a solution. Your paper must include details about the focus of your efforts to influence government and why the level of government you have chosen is the most appropriate for your particular problem. You should integrate multiple course topics, e.g. how to lobby government officials, how to use the media, etc., and your explanation should be very specific. For example, you should know enough about the problem that you can name the government officials by name and explain why you chose to approach them. You should demonstrate adequate knowledge about parameters of the policymaking process, name specific coalition partners and news media outlets, etc. Excellent papers will identify the potential opposition and your plan to deal with them. Throughout your solution section, you should connect your proposed plan back to the general factors that increase influence. If you are not using those factors, you should explain why (or rethink your plan or the factors). Other notes:

- Narrowly focus the problem and the proposed solution: Improving national education policy is impossibly vague. Making an incremental adjustment to hiring standards for school teachers in your local district is much more specific (and realistic). Your solution may not quite solve the problem, but you can succeed on this paper by proposing a solution that is a step in the right direction.
- Be realistic with your proposed solution: While I recognize that some of you will likely be elected to the U.S. Senate or head a foundation with billions of dollars in assets someday, be at least somewhat realistic with your plans. If the first step of your plan is to go to law school, you are headed in the wrong direction. I need to be persuaded that you currently have the skills and resources to have a chance at following through with your plan. Doing so will also help you narrow the focus of your paper appropriately.
- Your problem should not be something to change at BYU unless you plan on getting the government to solve the problem.
- The paper should be 2500-3500 words, or about 8-12 pages, double-spaced.

## Enrichment Activity

One Friday during the semester no briefings will be held so that you can pursue an enrichment activity. This activity should focus on history or the arts. A variety of activities are possible, such as visiting a historical site or museum, touring one of the many art museums, or attending a play or concert (no movies). This is an opportunity for you to visit a site that may only be open during business hours when you are either at work or in class. Write a report briefly summarizing the experience and discussing what you learned from the activity. Discuss not only individual details that were learned through the visit, but reflect overall on what was learned through the experience. The paper should be less than 600 words, or about two pages, double-spaced.

### Service Learning Experience

One Saturday during the semester will be dedicated to a group service project in the District of Columbia. Relate your service to your own life and to what you are learning about government and service. This is graded pass/fail. Papers that fail will not follow basic expectations for a writing assignment and will contain nothing interesting or thoughtful. The paper should be less than 600 words, or about two pages, double-spaced.

### Grading Criteria

In general, follow the guidelines outlined in “Standards for Student Papers” from the *Washington Seminar Handbook*. The BYU Writing Center has also recently published a [writing guide](#) that has other suggestions. Quality writing is usually correlated with how much time is taken to edit the paper (or how many drafts are written). Samuel Johnson said/wrote: “What is written without effort is in general read without pleasure.” Here are some specific grading criteria:

- Address the subject and fulfill the assignment as stated;
- Analyze and incorporate material from relevant briefings, class discussions, and field trips;
- Incorporate and synthesize assigned readings and relevant articles from the *Post*;
- Include a clear thesis statement (primary argument) that guides the structure of paper. The thesis statement is usually presented along with an outline of the paper in the introductory paragraph.
- Arguments are clear, well-stated, and analytical. Arguments using logic show how one thing implies another. Arguments using evidence produce specific examples, citations of other work, etc. The arguments all relate to and support contention of the thesis. The arguments are not overstated; exceptions or qualifications are acknowledged;
- Use an academic or professional (“white paper”) style of writing, not a journal entry, or letter home, or an angry blog entry: no exclamation points, no contractions, no worthless adverbs (e.g. completely, definitely, honestly, hopefully, incredibly, really, very, etc.).
- Contain adequate sourcing and citations. If you are not sure whether to cite something, cite it. If you state something that is common knowledge—Barack Obama won the 2008 presidential election—then you do not need a citation. If you have to look something up to write it in your paper—Barack Obama won 28 states and DC—then you should cite it (CNN 2008). If you learned something during the course of this class, then you should cite where you learned it from (e.g. reading, Constitution Center, George Washington actor, etc.).
- Writing mechanics are good, including transitions;
- Be virtually free of spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors;
- Bibliography and citations follow an accepted style (e.g. Chicago, Turabian, APA);
- Papers are double-spaced, stapled, and numbered; have a title page with name, date, title, and number of words.

An “A” paper will conform to these guidelines. Papers that merely summarize or outline the briefings and readings will receive no more than a “C” grade. Another style note: It is not necessary to begin sentences with phrases such as “I think that,” “I feel that,” “I suspect that,” and “I [would] argue that”: Every sentence in a paper could begin with such a phrase. It is

assumed that every sentence you write is your thought or argument. These phrases only need to be used in a paper if you mean to say, “I assert without accompanying logic or evidence that ....”

If you disagree with a paper grade, follow the instructions [here](#). The short version is that you should turn in a clean version of the paper, I will read it much more carefully and issue a new grade, and that grade could be higher or lower (or the same as) the previous grade. The new grade replaces the old grade.

## Grading

Your grade will be computed using a standard scale (87-89: B+, 84-86: B, etc.) as follows:

Class Attendance and Participation	10%
Reading Responses	20
First Paper	15
Second Paper	15
Final Paper	30
Enrichment Activity	5
Service Learning Project	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Concluding Comments

One of the goals of the Washington Seminar experience is to socialize students in a professional environment. Each day you will be interacting with individuals who have made Washington their homes and who have invested their futures in their careers and reputations. In government and politics, one’s status is closely tied to one’s professionalism.

As an intern, your own conduct will reflect well or poorly on your office, your supervisor, and BYU. The stakes are high—much higher than when you are simply taking a class in Provo. Your conduct should be different. If it is not, your grade in this course will reflect your lack of professionalism.

## Code of Conduct for Briefings:

**Always arrive early** (at least five minutes or more if required) **for a briefing**. Arriving late is discourteous to our speaker and therefore cannot be tolerated as it reflects poorly on BYU generally. If you are even one minute late you can expect to be denied entry—especially if we are visiting someone at an office that requires a security check. Late entries make the entire group look bad and are very unprofessional.

Always dress and act appropriately. Men should wear a jacket and tie and women appropriate professional attire. Slouching, dozing off, being inattentive and/or surfing the web during briefings is unacceptable, will make you look foolish, and reflects on BYU as a whole. Many of our speakers will be dynamic and exciting. Unfortunately, some will not. Please continue to be attentive anyway.

Always know something about the speaker and the topic. The Google requirement mentioned above is a bare minimum. The assigned readings are to help you develop some basic knowledge of the issue to be addressed. Pay particularly close attention to articles in *The Washington Post* during the week that relate to the briefing topic. Try checking the speaker's website as well.

Ask respectful and reasonable questions. It is very likely you will disagree with the views of some speakers. This is by design. Remember it is possible to disagree without being disagreeable. You are welcome and encouraged to challenge the assertions, facts or assumptions of any speaker. However, be certain to do so in a *polite and respectful manner*. After you ask one question, please allow everyone else to ask questions before asking another. (Do not attempt to disguise multiple questions as a single multi-part question.)

*Please abide by all of these guidelines. I will not hesitate to reduce participation scores for inappropriate behavior, and I have no qualms about reducing the score more than the 10 percent assigned for repeated offenses. You can go in the hole on this score.*

### **Important note:**

I assume that we will all have different ideological approaches and that we will disagree on various issues. However, I assume that we will disagree with respect and be willing to back up our opinions with data. I also assume that differing opinions on politics will not affect our respect for each other and ability to get along. This program gives us the joyful opportunity to debate and ponder knotty issues—sometimes even dilemmas—and learn from each other. I look forward to learning from you.

## **Other Course Policies**

### Email Policy

All class members are *required* to maintain an active email account. It is your responsibility to ensure that the email address that is listed for you in the BYU directory is accurate. To update your email address, log in to Route Y and select “Update Personal Information.” Here you can specify a current email address if you are not using the one assigned to you by BYU, or you can have your BYU email forwarded to the account you plan to use. The instructor and assistant will communicate important and time-sensitive class announcements via email. Email is also a very good way to reach me with questions. I strongly encourage you to check your email daily throughout the semester.

### Academic Honesty

From the Academic Honesty section of the BYU Honor Code: “The first injunction of the BYU Honor Code is the call to ‘be honest.’ Students come to the university not only to improve their minds, gain knowledge, and develop skills that will assist them in their life's work, but also to build character. ‘President David O. McKay taught that character is the highest aim of education’ (The Aims of a BYU Education, p. 6). It is the purpose of the BYU Academic Honesty Policy to assist in fulfilling that aim.”

“BYU students should seek to be totally honest in their dealings with others. They should complete their own work and be evaluated based upon that work. They should avoid academic dishonesty and misconduct in all its forms, including but not limited to plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, cheating, and other academic misconduct.”

If you write a paper for another course (past or present) that uses the same topic as a paper for this course, you need to approve it with me *first*, and then you must turn in to me a copy of the paper from your other course.

You can read the Honor Code, including examples of various forms of academic misconduct at [honorcode.byu.edu](http://honorcode.byu.edu). If you have any questions about academic conduct, I encourage you to consult these web pages and/or come speak with me.

### Students with Disabilities

Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere which reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the University Accessibility Center (422-2767). Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified documented disabilities. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the UAC office. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures. You should contact the Equal Employment Opportunity Office at 422-5895, D-282 ASB.

### Discrimination

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education. Title IX covers discrimination in programs, admissions, activities, and student-to-student sexual harassment. BYU's policy against sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the university but to students as well. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender based discrimination, please talk to your professor; contact the Equal Employment Opportunities Office at 422-5895 or 367-5689 (24-hours); or contact the Honor Code Office at 422-2847.

### Preventing Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a serious problem. One way to protect yourselves from sexual harassment and from charges of sexual harassment is to be scrupulously appropriate with all individuals you come in contact with.

By law, Brigham Young University is obligated to protect its students from gender discrimination, including unlawful sexual harassment, in all programs and activities sponsored by the university. As you embark on your internship, please be aware of what constitutes sexual harassment and what you should do if you encounter it during your internship opportunity.

### *Definition*

Sexual harassment is defined as *unwelcome* sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to the conduct is made a term or condition of an individual's employment, or
- Submission to or rejection of the conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting the individual; or
- The conduct interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

### *Examples*

Behaviors that contribute to a hostile environment include, but are not limited to:

- Discussing sexual activities
- Telling off-color jokes
- Unnecessary touching
- Commenting on physical attributes
- Displaying sexually suggestive pictures
- Using crude language or demeaning or inappropriate terms
- Using indecent gestures
- Engaging in hostile physical conduct

### *Appropriate Response*

Both employers and employees have a responsibility to prevent and stop workplace harassment. If you experience harassment while participating in a BYU-sponsored internship, report the behavior to your internship coordinator and your experience provider. They will take appropriate action to address and correct the behavior. You may also contact the university's Equal Opportunity Manager or 24-hour hotline at:

Equal Opportunity Manager

Brigham Young University

Telephone: (801) 422-5895

Email: [sue\\_demartini@byu.edu](mailto:sue_demartini@byu.edu)

24-hour hotline: 1 (888) 238-1062

<http://www.ethicspoint.com>

## **Briefings & Readings Schedule**

Over the course of the semester, we will be privileged to hear from a wide range of Washington experts drawn from a variety of occupations. As speakers agree to come, I will provide background readings most suited to helping you prepare to participate in a discussion with the speaker.

Remember that we will have briefings every Friday. I will generally let you know the speakers and times a week before. If you need to know what is scheduled for a particular day, talk with me and I will let you know the tentative schedule.

Flexibility will be critical. All briefing schedules can change at any time. Things come up, and speakers may have to cancel and reschedule. I will keep you informed of changes and request

that you be understanding. People with significant voices are in great demand, and we need to be able to respond to changes. I will email you the schedule each week. If there are changes, I will send out more emails. You can also consult Ali Spittler, our AA.

The schedule below is largely to let you know how due dates on papers for 391 and 399 fall over the semester.

**Winter 2010 Schedule:**

- January 15: First 399 paper due (Personal Professional Development.)
- January 29: 399 research proposal due
- February 5-6: Philadelphia Excursion, Depart Barlow Center at 8:00 a.m. Friday
- February 12: Enrichment Activity (no briefings, tentative date)
- February 19: First 391 paper due (The Founders and Contemporary Government)
- February 26: Enrichment Activity report due
- March 6: Service Learning Experience (tentative date)
- March 19: Service Learning Experience paper due
- March 26: Second 391 paper due (Public Service and My Career Choices)
- March 27: Gettysburg-Harpers Ferry Excursion. Depart Barlow Center at 7:30 a.m. Saturday
- April 2: Second 399 paper due (Organizational Analysis and Critique of Agency)
- April 5: Supervisors receive evaluation requests. Notify instructor if you plan to graduate in April.
- April 9: 391 Final paper due
- April 16: Final 391 meeting for all students. All forms and intern evaluations to be submitted. Students graduating in April must also submit all remaining course work for 399 (portfolio and research paper) and notify faculty advisor they are graduating.
- April 17: Barlow Center apartment inspections by Faculty Advisor. All students must vacate the Barlow Center (students remaining beyond this date will forfeit housing deposit).

- April 26: Last day to submit portfolio and research paper (399) to faculty advisor.
- April 28: Faculty advisor submits 391 grades for all students and 399 grades for those graduating in December.