

Brigham Young University
Political Science 399: Washington Seminar Internship
Spring/Summer 2010

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

Course Overview and Objectives

This course joins your internship experience and observations together with more traditional academic material by requiring you to put your day-to-day internship experiences into a broader academic framework. This is achieved through research and writing related to your internship. Your grade is jointly determined by your performance in your internship and written assignments. The assigned papers will have you fit your work assignment into the broader picture of national policy-making.

The written work consists of several components, calibrated in proportion to the number of 399 credit hours for which you are registered. Following is the break-down of assignments.

Grading:

Grade Breakdown for Nine Credit Hours of 399:

- Supervisor Evaluation 25%
- Research Proposal 5%
- Personal Professional Development: 5%
- Organization Analysis and Critique 10%
- Portfolio 20%
- Research Paper (16-20 Pages) 35%

Grade Breakdown for Six Credit Hours of 399:

- Supervisor Evaluation 25%
- Research Proposal 5%
- Personal Professional Development: 5%
- Organization Analysis and Critique 10%
- Portfolio 30%
- Research Paper (8-10 Pages) 25%

Grade Breakdown for Three Credit Hours of 399:

- Supervisor Evaluation: 25%
- Personal Professional Development: 10%
- Organization Analysis and Critique 20%
- Portfolio 45%

A standard grading scale (87-89: B+, 84-86: B, etc.) will be used to assign grades.

Assignments

Assignments are due on Friday morning at the beginning of the meetings on the day indicated. Papers submitted after these dates will be penalized 10% for each day they are late.

Personal Professional Development Paper. Due May 7.

Systematically consider your particular role within your internship organization. Write a paper that includes the following:

- Your basic job description and your place in the organizational hierarchy (very brief).
- The skills required to perform your job well.
- A discussion of goals for your internship. Some of these should be devoted to improving your skills.
- A discussion of learning objectives in your internship. Refer to pages 21-27 of the 2008 Washington Seminar Student Handbook (38-46 of the 2005 Handbook) for a list of possible learning objectives. These objectives concern *how* or *why* an organization does something or interacts with other organizations in a particular manner, in addition to *what* the organization does. Specific is better than general: in stronger papers, one cannot merely substitute one organization name and policy area for another and turn in the same paper.
- The paper should be 600-900 words, or about 2-3 pages, double-spaced.

You should discuss some of these items with your supervisor. It will help your supervisor to know you are serious and thoughtful, and in knowing your goals and objectives, your supervisor may steer opportunities your way. In addition, your supervisor may help you choose goals and objectives that are realistic.

Organizational Analysis and Critique. Due July 23.

Systematically analyze the nature of your internship organization. Write a paper that includes at least the following:

- Description of the organization, including official purposes (as described in its mission statement) and unofficial purposes, historical origins, size of budget and funding sources, personnel size and qualifications, and organizational structure (and where it fits into a broader organization, if at all).
- Analysis of the organization's performance in relation to its purposes and goals: What is the metric used to assess performance? Why is or why is it not successful in accomplishing its goals? What is its decision-making process (officially and actually)?
- Critique of the organization: What recommendations would you make to improve the organization's performance? Why do you think it would improve the performance? Why do you think your recommendation has not already been tried or adopted? Be honest but realistic. Take into account the resources and powers at the disposal of the agency, as well as the constraints and obstacles it faces.
- The paper should be 1200-1800 words, or about 4-6 pages, double-spaced. Over half of the paper should be on analysis and critique. If you could show your analysis and critique to your supervisor, you are probably not being critical enough. I will not share your paper with your supervisor or internship provider.

Portfolio. Due August 23 (August 6, if graduating in August).

Over the course of your internship you will increase your skills and knowledge in a variety of areas. Documenting this growth can be both rewarding and interesting, particularly in the months and years after the internship when you will want to have some tangible evidence of your experience. A portfolio is a good way to document your work and illustrate your knowledge and skill development.

A good portfolio can contain a variety of entries, including correspondence (both memoranda and letters), reports written for your supervisor or other staff in the organization, notes on meetings or projects, or other general observations from your experience. Include anything that you feel demonstrates your skill or knowledge acquisition in the internship. Be careful not to include anything that might be considered confidential unless you have your work supervisor's permission to do so.

Entry cover page. Each entry in the portfolio must include a typed cover page with a section (paragraph) addressing each of the following:

- Explanation of the entry
- Skills acquired as a result of working on this entry: e.g. writing, interpersonal, computer, analytical, research, quantitative, etc.
- Knowledge that you have gained or improved as a result of working on this entry
- Questions raised or ideas for future investigation (either during the internship or later) that have come to you as a result of having worked on this entry. If possible, in this section state a concept, principle, etc., from your previous on-campus course work that relates to the entry.

There are examples on pages 19-20 of the 2008 Washington Seminary Student Handbook (36-37 of the 2005 Handbook). Give thoughtful attention to your response to the last section. Your answer to this question will be used to evaluate how reflective you are about your work and its relevance to previous course work in the discipline.

The cover pages should be written over the course of the internship at the same time the portfolio entries are completed. It is less effective (and strongly discouraged) if you write them all at the end of the internship just prior to submitting your portfolio.

Internship summary paper. At the beginning of the portfolio include an internship summary paper in which you describe:

- knowledge you gained of institutions, processes, concepts related to previous study;
- skills you improved or acquired;
- understanding of career possibilities you acquired; and
- your personal growth from the experience.

Reference the entries in your portfolio as evidence of your development in the above areas. This paper need not be long, but should be of sufficient length to show that you have been reflective about your experience and to explain why the internship was meaningful for you and how it enhanced your education. You may wish to share a copy of this paper with your work supervisor.

Format. Assemble the portfolio in a three-ring binder and submit it to the Washington Seminar Faculty Advisor by the deadline indicated in the assignment schedule. The presentation should be professional and organized. Some method of dividing entries (e.g. table of contents, tabs, etc.) will make the portfolio more organized and easier to read. Ten percent of the portfolio grade will be based on the quality of the presentation.

Grading Criteria. A portfolio deserving of an A grade will have at least 12 entries with well written, reflective cover pages and summary paper. It will be well organized and professionally presented. Portfolios that are lacking in any of the above qualities, but have reflective cover pages and summary paper will merit a B. Those that are merely descriptive or have few entries will receive a C grade.

Research Paper (6 and 9 credit hour students only)

Research Proposal. Due May 4.

Submit a research proposal for your final research project. The length of this will vary, but 3-5 pages should be adequate. Your research design should include a brief introduction to your topic, a clear statement of your research question, and a plan to collect the necessary data for the paper (e.g. specialized secondary sources unique to your internship, in depth interviews, statistical data...). Note that this is a design to do original research, not a design to merely go out and read existing secondary sources. You must read those secondary sources (i.e. do research) *before* you write the research design to figure out what original research needs to be done. You should discuss these existing secondary sources in the research proposal. Political Science majors, International Relations majors, and other social science students should frame their research question in terms of dependent and independent variable(s), and causal mechanisms. As you consider a topic, take advantage of the resources and access afforded you by your internship. Choose a topic that is closely related (or even identical) to the work you are already doing. Talk to your supervisor about this assignment and ask for advice or help in choosing a topic. It may create opportunities for you at work.

Final Research Paper. Due August 23 (August 6, if graduating in August).

The standards listed on pages 30-31 of the 2008 Washington Seminar Student Handbook (49-51 of the 2005 Handbook) are a good guide for this paper. Political Science and International Relations majors should follow the guidelines of Political Science 200.

To have an excellent research paper, you need a clear research question (i.e. theory or hypothesis) and data that you have collected during your internship. To find a good research question, you need to read the existing secondary literature (and reference it in your paper). Your paper should be more concerned with how/why questions than mere description. You should be able to show how your data support (or not) your hypothesis, and how you are able to rule out alternative hypotheses.

One way to write an effective research paper is to present two theories that make opposite predictions about a particular subject (e.g. candidates can buy an election vs. candidates cannot buy an election), and collect data through your internship that will allow you to test which theory is correct (in this specific instance). Then you can discuss whether you expect the supported

theory to be supported in all instances or not and why you have made such a conclusion (and similarly for the unsupported theory).

There are other approaches possible for research papers. However, all excellent research papers are conversant in the existing literature, have clear causal arguments (theories or hypotheses), and convincing evidence. Please come by and discuss your research paper with me.

For the 6 credit class, the research paper should be 2500-3000 words, or about 8-10 pages, double-spaced, not including tables and graphs. For the 9 credit class, the research paper should be 5000-6000 words, or about 16-20 pages, double-spaced, not including tables and graphs. I can be convinced to accept a longer paper if the research is excellent. I will not share your research paper with your supervisor or internship provider. If your paper uses confidential data, I will not share your paper with anyone else.

Turn in (a copy of) your research proposal evaluation form with your research paper.

Other Course Policies

The policies and grading criteria for 391 also apply to this class. To save space and paper I have not repeated them here. Please refer to your 391 syllabus.