Political Science 427: Legislative Internship  
Fall 2015

Instructor: Professor Amy Gangl

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Office Hours:

INTRODUCTION

This course brings together academia, your internship, and your professional future. Our goal is to develop your professional skill set, gain expertise in policy analysis, and better understand the political and policy job market. Unlike the typical political science course, you will be an integral part of teaching the curriculum. With the exception of early classes devoted to policy analysis and careers in politics, pairs of students will deliver interactive workshops on topics ranging from legislative research to campaigns and fundraising. Groups will research topics and engage the class through presentations, discussions, and interactive projects. Following student presentations, the instructor will add his two cents and present additional relevant research. The instructor is also available to assist in developing your presentations.

Success in this course will depend upon your strong performance in each of the following areas. First, it is necessary to be reflective about your experience in the internship and be able to link what you are observing to theories, concepts or principles studied in previous political science courses. Second, you must be able to think and write analytically, not just descriptively, about your experience. Third, much of the course work requires you to be self-directed, it is important that you keep track of deadlines and submit the assignments on time. The assignment schedule is intended to have you examine and reflect on various aspects of the experience at key times in the internship. The effectiveness of the assignments is diminished if they are submitted late. Finally, you must be a hard-working, reliable, competent staff member for your experience provider (employer).

I encourage you to contact me by email or make an appointment if you have questions about the material, your internship experience, or would like to provide me feedback about the course.

READINGS

The following book is available and is required for the course:


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There will also be online readings and multimedia materials assigned throughout the course. Three sources I highly recommend that highlight that intersection of political science and American politics on a daily basis are:

1. The Monkey Cage:
http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/

2. Michiefs of Faction

http://www.mischiefsoffaction.com/

3. Brendan Nyhan:

http://brendan-nyhan.com/

Additionally, I highly recommend that you follow state and national politics during the course by reading a daily newspaper.

GRADING

The course assignments will be weighted according to the following criteria in determining your final grade:

- Pre-Internship Report - 10% due by Monday Sept. 14th
- Portfolio - 15% due Tuesday Dec. 15
- Discussion Participation in Class and Online - 15%
- Mid-internship Self-Assessment - 5% due Wednesday October 21
- Student Workshop Presentation - 15%
- Research Project - 25% due Tuesday Dec. 15
- Final Supervisor Evaluation - 15%

ASSIGNMENTS

Pre-internship Report – due Monday September 14 (10% of final grade)

Prior to the beginning of your internship, write a paper to help you become better acquainted with the experience provider and the nature of the work you will do there. Part of this assignment will require you to interview your work supervisor. The paper should be three to five pages long and provide all the following information.

1. Examine the office or organization for which you will be working, including a description of its mission and goals, its structure, and any major current issues, activities or projects with which it is now dealing. If you are going to a congressional office, you should also tell something about the background and political interests of the senator or representative for whom you will be working, along with an examination of his or her voting record and any current legislation he or she is sponsoring or co-sponsoring (see Politics in America, The Almanac of American Politics, Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, The National Journal and the member’s web site).

2. Describe what you believe your responsibilities will be in the internship.

3. Interview your work supervisor or the intern coordinator in the office and report his or her response to each of the following questions:
• What is the standard dress in the office?
• Who will I report to in the internship?
• Who will my co-workers be (i.e. names and positions of those you will work with on a regular basis)?
• What should I do to prepare for the internship?
• What kind of computer software is used in the office?
• What training will be available to me the first week?
• What will my daily routine be like?
• What major projects will the office be focusing on during my internship?
• Are there books, articles or other materials I should read to prepare?
• Are there materials relevant to organization or internship that you can access online or that could be sent to you?
• What can I expect to learn in this internship?
• What are the expectations you have for interns in your office?

4. Outline goals you have for yourself in each of the following areas:

• Knowledge you hope to gain about institutions, processes, or concepts related to political science;
• Skills you would like to improve or acquire;
• Understanding of career possibilities or direction you hope to gain; and
• Other personal goals you have for the experience.

5. Include a bibliography of sources used (including interviews or the Internet) and footnote where appropriate. The paper must demonstrate that you have carefully examined the office/organization where you will be working and the internship experience there. Substantial weight will be given to how well the paper is written (spelling, grammar or style errors will be penalized) and the extent to which you address all of the above questions. This paper should be submitted as early as possible, but no later than the end of the first week of your internship.

**Portfolio – due Tuesday December 15 (15% of final grade)**

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.
You can use the ePortfolio tool in our online courseroom (and create privacy settings to permit only the professor to view it) or create your own portfolio. If you choose not to use the ePortfolio tool, it must be created in something (or several things – Word documents, video, audio, etc.) you can send me via email at the end of the term if you choose not to use the ePortfolio tool.

Each entry in the portfolio must include:

- An explanation of the entry;
- The skills (e.g. writing, interpersonal, computer, analytical, research, quantitative, etc.) and/or knowledge that you have gained or improved as a result of working on this entry; and
- Any 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 political science course work.

At the beginning of the portfolio at the end of the term, include a summary paper in which you describe:

- Knowledge you gained of institutions, processes, concepts related to political science;
- 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.

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 only a C grade.

**Discussion Participation (15% of final grade)**

Each week there will be online Discussion Forums as well as in-class discussions that will require you to reflect on Bardach book as well as student’s class presentations and other issues related to your internship, professional goals, and everyday politics. For an online course to work, comprehensive, regular engagement in weekly Discussions is expected and will be worth 15% of your final grade.

**Mid-internship Assessment – due Wednesday October 21 (5% of final grade)**
Half way through the course, I ask you to assess your performance in the internship and note any areas in which you feel improvement is necessary. Write a two to three page paper that addresses each of the following points:

1. What are you doing well in your internship?
2. In what ways do you need to improve in the internship?
3. Are you satisfied with your work assignments? Why or why not?
4. Describe your relationship with your work supervisor and co-workers. Is there anything you need to do to improve those relationships?
5. Briefly summarize the knowledge and skills you have gained or improved since beginning the internship.
6. How has the experience challenged the assumptions you had prior to the beginning of the internship about working for this or a similar organization?
7. If there are any problems (i.e. relationships, work assignments, other issues) with the internship, what have you done to resolve them? Are there any left unresolved?

**Student Workshop Topics (15% of final grade)**

You will work with one or two other students to present a policy issue Powerpoint, video or other interactive presentation of your choosing. You can choose a policy that you and your fellow students are all interested in and/or is related to your internship or something that is on the agenda in Wisconsin politics (or your state/state you are working on). I will provide an example of a presentation and Discussion questions aligned with them in the first week of the course.

**Research Papers – due Tuesday December 15 (25% of grade)**

An essential strategy for success in legislative internships is to master daily administrative tasks. In order to receive greater responsibility, interns need to answer the phones, make copies, and write letters with excellence. In addition, however, interns should seek ways to demonstrate their substantive research and writing skills and develop a product that will not only benefit legislative staff but also serve as a writing sample for future jobs and graduate school applications. Within the first few weeks of the internship, students should meet with their supervisor and let them know this class requires a writing or research component. The intern should ask if any of the legislative staff have issues for which could benefit additional research even if it requires substantial time outside of work hours. Specific projects should be developed with supervisors on the job but must be approved by the instructor. Examples of suitable projects include policy analyses, program or policy evaluations, or packets supporting new or existing legislation.

To support policy analysis, students should utilize Eugene Bardach’s *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*. This path may need to be altered to fit the specific needs of each office. That said, the basic strategy of analyzing a problem, developing criteria, evaluating alternatives, and choosing the best option can be easily applied to a range of policy issues in any office.
Papers should be eight to twelve pages (of text) in length, double-spaced, with one inch margins, and should be professional in appearance and organization. This means use appropriate citations, headers, references, tables, figures, etc… This paper will account for 25% of the student’s grade. Papers should also include a single-page executive summary. In the real world, this is all most people will read and should include all major points from your analysis as well as your recommendation.

COURSE POLICIES

-Academic honesty: All instances of plagiarism in writing assignments will be given a grade of zero. Please consult the writing center if you are unaware of what constitutes plagiarism.

-I wish to fully include persons with special challenges in this course. Please let me know if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction or assessments for this course to enable you to fully participate. Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of the information you share with me. You may also contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center (1305 Linden Drive, mcburney@odos.wisc.edu) if you have questions about campus policies and services.

-The instructor and the university reserve the right to modify, amend, or change the syllabus (course requirements, grading policy, etc.).

COURSE OUTLINE

Week of September 14

-Pre-Internship Write-up due Monday September 14

-Reading: Bardach, Part I (pgs. 1-70)

-Introductory Discussion board questions due Wednesday September 16

Week of September 21

-Student Workshop Presentation and Discussion Responses

-Reading: Bardach Part II and Part III (pgs 79-123)

-Bardach Worksheet and Discussion (online)

Week of September 28

-Student Workshop Presentation and Discussion Responses

-Discussion online responses/engagement with Workshop Presentation
Week of October 5
- Frontline: Obama’s Deal and Online Discussion
- Research proposal description

Week of October 12
- Student Workshop Presentation and Discussion Responses

Week of October 19
- Mid-Internship report due Wednesday October 21
- Discussion Responses (Online Discussions – Reflecting on your Internships)

Week of October 26
- Frontline: Big Sky, Big Money
- Big Sky, Big Money Discussion

Week of November 2
- Student Workshop Presentation and Discussion Responses

Week of November 9
- Student Workshop Presentation and Discussion Responses

Week of November 16
- Student Workshop Presentation and Discussion Responses

Week of November 23
- Student Workshop Presentation and Discussion Responses

Week of November 30
- Student Workshop Presentation and Discussion Responses

Week of December 7
- Workshop draft of research proposal
- Supervisor evaluations emailed
Week of December 14:

- Portfolio due Tuesday Dec. 15

- Research paper due Tuesday Dec. 15