POL 89A: POLITICAL SCIENCE INTERNSHIP

Professor Ryan LaRochelle  
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Office: Olin-Sang 122

Schedule: Tuesday, 6:30 – 7:50  
Classroom: Mandel G10  
Office Hours: Tues/Thurs, 3:45 – 4:45

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

This course provides the opportunity for a structured learning experience in a supportive and collaborative environment. Internships allow students to gain practical experience in a desired field while reinforcing and supplementing academic coursework. Course assignments and your field experiences will help you to develop your analytical thinking, oral presentation, and writing skills. In particular, the course pays special attention to developing students’ oral communication skills and completion of course will satisfy the university’s oral communications requirement. It is critical for students to be able to communicate effectively with co-workers and supervisors at their internship placements. In an effort to build students’ oral presentation skills, the course includes several opportunities for students to make presentations and receive feedback from the instructor and their peers. In addition, we will spend portions of several class sessions during Section I focusing on strategies and tips for creating effective oral presentations, overcoming presentation anxiety, and developing active listening skills. This course also includes several career preparation modules on topics such as writing a resume or CV, drafting cover letters, interviewing, and networking. These skills are vital as you leave Brandeis and enter the workforce post-graduation.

The course is designed to combine experiences working in fields such as government, law, media, and interest advocacy among others, with coursework that ties your internship back to the broader study of politics. Course readings and assignments, combined with students’ work in the field, will allow students to examine and evaluate a serious tension in the discipline: Is academic political science overly theoretical and thus divorced from the real-world practice of politics? The seminar will examine the role that political science research plays in a democratic society. What responsibilities do political scientists have to the broader public? Can political scientists do a better job of informing citizens and serving democracy? In what ways might social science research help your organizations perform more effectively?

Success in this four-credit course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (e.g. completing course readings, working on paper assignments, preparing discussion points, etc.)

LEARNING GOALS

The purpose of this course is to integrate academic and experiential learning. After completing this course you will gain the experience of working in a field related to political science and a greater appreciation and understanding of the relevant academic material. Specifically, by the end of your internship experience and this course you should:
1. Demonstrate a reflective and critical understanding of the day-to-day operations at your internship site;
2. Build a set of professional skills and awareness of the marketplace, and explore possible postgraduate employment or graduate study;
3. Develop an understanding of the role that political science research plays in a democratic society and evaluate whether contemporary scholars fulfill their duties;
4. Evaluate the similarities and differences between political science scholarship and the real-life practice of politics.
5. Develop your analytical, writing, and oral communication skills through experiences at your internship placement and course assignments.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Internship Placement: You must intern between 8-10 hours per week over the course of 10-12 weeks. These requirements do not include transportation time and should be completed at the selected internship site. At the end of all internships, a completed evaluation form from the supervisor at the site is required; this evaluation will contribute to student’s final grade for this course, (see course grading below).

Daily Log: While at the internship site, students are required to keep a log of your activities: a brief report of the work you completed on a specific date.

Class Participation and Attendance: Full class participation and attendance are required. Regular and thoughtful participation from students in class is central to the course’s success. Students are expected to read all of the assigned readings for each class. This course does not use a textbook, but pulls from a variety of articles and book chapters. All readings for this course will be posted on Latte. Not completing the readings will result in a loss of participation points. Please notify the instructor if you expect to be absent. Setting up an office-hours visit with the instructor is also appropriate if in doubt about any of the material.

Two Short Analytical Papers: A 3-4 page paper on the organizational culture and mission of your internship site, due on Friday, March 3. A 3-4 page analytical review of the academic scholarship related to your internship site, due on Friday, March 24. This assignment should serve as a prelude to the Strategy Guide assignment below. Students are to meet with the instructor outside of class to identify and discuss 3-4 pieces of scholarship related to their internship placements.

Two Career Prep Assignments: One on creating and/or updating your resume and one on writing a cover letter.

Final Strategy Guide/Handbook: This 8-10 page handbook will outline a set of strategies and practices that you believe would help your internship site/organization better achieve its goals moving forward, based on our course materials and discussions. Your goal is to concisely

1 Students who have completed their internships prior to this semester will have a slightly modified set of assignments.
synthesize and evaluate the practical utility of social scientific analysis for your internship sites. **Papers should be uploaded to LATTE before 5:00 pm on May 8.** Late submissions will only be accepted under exceptional circumstances and with prior notification. Detailed instructions will be posted to LATTE and handed out in class.

Presentations: Students will make two short (5-10 minutes) and one longer (12-15 minutes) oral presentations throughout the term:

1. **On February 28,** students will prepare a short presentation of the organizational structure and mission of your internship site.
2. **On March 21,** students will prepare a short presentation on the academic scholarship related to their internship site.
3. You will prepare a 12-15 minute presentation of your final paper to be presented during the final seminar meeting on **May 2.**

In an effort to develop students’ oral communication skills, the instructor and your classmates will provide feedback on your two short presentations to help you improve your skills and prepare for your final presentation. Detailed instructions for each presentation will be posted to LATTE and handed out in class.

**GRADE FACTORS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily internship log</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internship supervisor’s evaluation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two short presentations</td>
<td>10% (5% each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two short papers</td>
<td>20% (10% each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career Prep Assignments</td>
<td>10% (5% each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Strategy Guide/Handbook</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation of final paper</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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**DISABILITIES AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

If you are a student who needs academic accommodations because of a documented disability, please contact me and present your letter of accommodation as soon as possible. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting academic accommodations, you should contact Beth Rodgers-Kay in Academic Services (x6-3470 or brodgers@brandeis.edu.) Letters of accommodation should be presented at the start of the semester to ensure provision of accommodations, and absolutely before the day of an exam or test. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.

You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University’s policies on academic integrity (see [http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/ai](http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/ai)). Academic integrity is central to the mission of educational excellence at Brandeis University. Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently, except when assignments specifically authorize collaborative effort. It is acceptable to use the words or ideas of another person provided the source is properly
acknowledged. This means that you must use citations and quotation marks to indicate the source of any phrases, sentences, paragraphs or ideas found in published volumes, on the internet, or created by any student. Violations of University policy on academic integrity, described in Section 3 of Rights and Responsibilities, may result in failure in the course or on the assignment, and could end in suspension from the University. Please note you are required to properly cite sources in all assignments for this class. If you are in doubt about the instructions for any assignment in this course, it is your responsibility to ask for clarification. Any suspected instances of alleged dishonesty will be referred to the Office of Student Development and Conduct. Instances of academic dishonesty may result in sanctions including but not limited to, failing grades being issued, educational programs, and suspension.

A NOTE ON LAPTOPS, TABLETS, SMARTPHONES, AND OTHER TECHNOLOGICAL DEVICES

In class meetings, you may not use a laptop, tablet, cell phone, or any other similar device for purposes other than note taking and reviewing course readings. When people use these devices to check e-mail, play games, etc., they distract not only themselves, but also the instructor and others around them. If repeated violations occur, I reserve the right to ban the use of laptops and other devices in class.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

NOTE: I reserve the right to change the schedule over the course of the semester. I will announce any and all changes in class or via the course Latte site.

Introduction and Overview

Tuesday, January 17: Introductions and Overview


Part I: Organizations

Tuesday, January 24: Interacting with Supervisors, Colleagues, and the Community

1. H. Frederick Sweitzer and Mary A. King, The Successful Internship: Transformation and Empowerment in Experiential Learning (Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole Cengage, 2003), Chapters 7 (“Getting to Know Your Colleagues”) and 9 (“Getting to Know the Community”).
Tuesday, January 31: Organizations: Goals, Rules, and Tasks


Tuesday, February 7: Organizational Culture and Management Styles


Tuesday, February 14: Working in Groups


Tuesday, February 21 – No class

Tuesday, February 28: Student Presentations on Internship Sites

*Part II: Political Science and Practical Politics*

Tuesday, March 7: Political Science and Practical Politics


Tuesday, March 14: Political Scientists’ Duties and Contributions


Tuesday, March 21: Student Presentations on Scholarship Related to their Internship Sites
Tuesday, March 28: Career Skills Workshop: Networking and Interviewing

1. Guest speaker: Jon Schlesinger, Director, Hiatt Career Center

Tuesday, April 4: Career Skills Workshop: Resumes and CVs


Tuesday, April 11 – No class

Tuesday, April 18 – No class

Tuesday, April 25: Career Skills Workshop: Cover Letters


Tuesday, May 2: Student Presentations