WASHINGTON SEMESTER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM
TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES
INTERNSHIP COURSE SYLLABUS
GOVT 420-001T or JLS 467-001T

Professor Katharine Kravetz

The internship is likely to be one of the highlights of your semester in Washington. It is also fundamental to the Washington Semester Program's grounding in experiential learning. For two days each week you will work at an organization where you will have the opportunity to deepen your knowledge about issues of importance to you, enhance your professional skills, build your professional network, and inform your career choices in this field.

The internship course will complement both the seminar and your actual internship experience through collaboration in individual and group meetings. The goals of the course are to

- provide a means for you to analyze your internship experience
- introduce you to potential career paths in community change
- offer you a network of contacts for future professional growth
- build your professional skills

My role is to

- help you secure an internship that best matches your interests and objectives
- assist you with any problems that may arise with your internship
- provided information and support to further your professional goals and skills
- evaluate your performance in the internship

Feel free to schedule appointments with me by phone or e-mail, or by leaving a message on my office door. I want to help you in any way I can to make your internship experience a positive one.

Securing an internship

Every Washington Semester student finds an internship, and most find ones they rate highly. Washington is full of organizations that rely on interns, so most of you will have many choices. You have several weeks to make a selection, and for the vast majority of you this will be ample time.

1. **Narrowing your search**

   We have several sources for finding an internship. They include:

   - **The Washington Semester Internship Database**, which is the largest one in Washington. You can access it through your student I. D. number, or use a printed copy.
   - **The Internship Bazaar**, which is on the first morning of regular classes. There, numerous organizations will try to persuade you of their merits and arrange for interviews. Even if you are unlikely to avail yourself of any of the internships offered there, it's a good opportunity for networking and evaluating what is important to you.
   - **The Internet**. More and more, organizations are publicizing their internship opportunities on the Internet.
   - **Student evaluations of prior internships**, available in the Reading Room in Federal Hall. These are an invaluable source in helping you narrow your search.
   - **Me.** I have a network of contacts and prior knowledge of internships, including materials in my office, so I can help you and discuss choices with you.

2. **The interview**

   We highly recommend that you arrange *at least* three interviews before deciding on an internship. The organizations that work with us understand that we consider the interview process part of the course and that we do not want you to make a decision until you have conducted several interviews.

   In advance. In advance of the interview, you should:

   - Find out as much as you can about the internship organization.
   - Have ready a resumé and writing sample. I'd be happy to look them over and discuss them with you before you prepare the final versions.
   - Map your route to the interview and ask how long it will take to get there. Allow plenty of time to get lost and still be there on time.
   - Think about the strengths that you would bring to the internship, such as work or course experience, personal interests, and goals.
   - Think about what questions you want to ask. Remember, the internship is as much for you as it is for the internship organization.

3. **At the interview.** For the interview, you should dress professionally, even if you may not have to on the internship itself. Have your class schedule calendar available so you know what days and hours you will not be able to work. And feel free to ask about anything that would help you in your own decision-making. Questions might include the following:
   - Who will be my supervisor, and is it possible for me to meet that person?
   - What will be my exact duties?
   - Will I be able to work on any specific projects (if you have such an interest)?
   - If so, how will my time be divided among my duties?
   - Does the internship provide the opportunity for stipends, conferences, or other benefits (if any of these is important to you)?

4. **After the interview.** Any oral thank-you should be followed by a written note, even if you are unlikely to accept an internship with that organization if offered. Once you've decided on an internship, make a personal call or send a note giving them your decision. It's always a good idea not to burn bridges.

5. **Choosing the internship.** Obviously these decisions are very personal. Still, in making your decision, you may want to ask yourself the following:
   - What are the most important criteria for me in choosing an internship? Is it the size or type of organization, the subject or type of the work, the name recognition, or the people who work there? (Remember those criteria on days when other aspects of the internship become frustrating!)
   - Is it important that the organization reflects or challenges my political or social beliefs?
   - Do I want structure or independence?
   - Do I want low or high pressure?
   - Do I want to focus on research and writing or on people and fieldwork?
   - Do I want a casual or a formal work environment?

The Internship Contract

In your orientation packet you will find the Washington Semester Internship Contract, which both you and internship organization will both sign. This document is often a formality, but at times it can be important. Most importantly, it specifies that **at least 60% of your time be devoted to substantive work.** You should have a detailed discussion with your supervisor concerning your duties, and make sure the Contract fits your understanding before you sign. These duties might include the following:

- Researching or gathering information on particular issues
- Organizing or assisting with special events or projects
- Assisting with clients or cases
- Writing articles or speeches
- Creating or maintaining a database
- Attending hearings or meetings

That clear delineation of your duties helps to avoid or deal with misunderstandings or problems. The Contract also serves as a basis for evaluating your work performance and determining your grade at the end of the semester. The completed and signed (by your supervisor, you and me) Contract must be returned to me on the date specified in the Schedule of Classes.

On the job

After you Contract is signed and returned to me, I will officially confirm your placement in a letter to your supervisor. In it, I will suggest that your supervisor have regular meetings with you throughout the semester. I urge you to arrange for these meetings, at which you can discuss expectations or problems and receive feedback. In addition, I will ask your supervisor at least once during the semester to provide feedback on your work.

You are expected to work an eight-hour day each Monday and Tuesday, except on American University vacation days, about which you should inform your internship in advance. You may put in more time at your discretion, but remember that your internship may not interfere with your other classes, including the Seminar.

If you have any concerns about the internship, you should try to discuss them with your supervisor. I am always available to brainstorm with you how to raise your concerns and suggest solutions. It is important that you discuss any problems before they get to a crisis level.

Classes

You will have a series of internship classes. They will consist primarily of discussions with guest speakers – most of whom are recent alumni of Transforming Communities -- about their careers in such areas as government, volunteer organizations, the nonprofit sector, and foundations.

Individual meetings

At the beginning of the semester you will have an individual meeting with me to discuss your resume, the process of finding an internship, and your internship choices. You may also meet with me individually as often as you like during the semester.

Reading

Diaz, Ande, The Harvard College Guide to Careers in Public Service. Harvard College Office of Career Services

Academic requirements and grading

While it is important to gain work experience, keep in mind that the internship is above all a learning experience. It is important to reflect on your work and on the organization, and to share that reflection with others who can offer observations and suggestions. How we do this is to some degree up to you, with the understanding that your final grade in the course will be distributed as follows:

1. **Supervisor's evaluation** **40%**

Your internship supervisor will complete the Washington Semester Internship Evaluation Form (a copy of which is available from the Washington Semester Program Office) toward the end of the semester. You should arrange for a final session with your supervisor in order to discuss the Evaluation.

2. **Assignments**

   a. Your cv and sample cover letter **20%**

   b. The initial process **20%**

   After you have completed the initial stages of the internship program, which include the search, the interview, the selection, and the internship contract, you will prepare a paper describing this process and your own reactions to it. The paper will include a discussion of why you chose the internship, what influenced your decision, and your goals for the internship.

   c. The final paper **20%**

   You will discuss how your organization is trying to change communities, how effective it is, how it could be more effective, and what role you have played. It will include an interview of your supervisor or another individual in your organization.

Academic Integrity Code

Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code which can be found at ***http://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/code01.htm***. It is expected that all assignments will be completed according to the standards set forth in this code. By registering, students have acknowledged awareness of the Academic code and are obliged to become familiar with their rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary action will be taken should such violations occur. Please see your professor if there are any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general, or as they relate to particular requirements for this or any other course or work at American University.