

**AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON SEMESTER PROGRAM
AMERICAN POLITICS II (INTERNSHIP COURSE)
Spring 2007**

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Course Objectives

The immediate purpose of this course is to help you have a successful internship experience. You will become very familiar with many aspects of your internship, and will learn more about your own interests by comparing your prior expectations and your internship “real world” experiences with those of your classmates.

The long-term purpose of this course is to sharpen your professional skills for the future. Each time we meet as a class, we will discuss a new topic or skill that will help you extract the maximum benefit from your internship site time while also preparing you for a career. You will begin by identifying an area of interest before the Friday, January 12 Internship Bazaar. By May, you will be able to draft a quality resume and cover letter; confidently handle networking and presenting your ideas to others; understand how to apply to law and graduate school; and, more generally, know the correct steps to take to pursue your ideal career.

Course Organization

This course has two components: a classroom discussion session (the academic component), which will be held about four times this semester; and your individual internships (the professional component), which you will attend each week on Thursdays and Fridays.

Each component serves a unique purpose. Our classroom sessions will give you the academic background you need to understand and analyze your “real world” experiences, while the internship itself allows you to have the rare opportunity to simultaneously learn and test classroom theories and skills while working in the Washington, D.C. environment.

Grade Breakdown

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

<u>Written Assignments and Student Presentation</u>	40%
Resume and Cover Letter	10% (5% each)
Weekly Journal	20%
Analysis of Experience	5%
Presentation	5%
<u>Class Attendance and Participation</u>	20%
<u>Internship Supervisor Assessment</u>	40%

In all, sixty percent (60%) of your grade will be based on my evaluation of your assignments. Among the factors I will use to rate your performance will be your professionalism; regular attendance at -- and willingness to actively participate in -- our meetings; the quality of your submitted assignments; and whether the assignments were handed in on time.

Two additional points: (1) Late assignments (if I choose to accept them) are subject to a 5% penalty for each day -- including weekends and holidays -- that they are late. (2) The internship contract that you and your supervisor will both sign **MUST** be handed in on time (Wednesday, January 31) or I **WILL REDUCE YOUR OVERALL CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION GRADE ONE FULL LETTER GRADE FOR EACH DAY THE INTERNSHIP CONTRACT IS LATE**. Yes, it's that important. See below for a detailed breakdown of the grading.

Academic Component

As noted above, we will meet as a group for an hour-long session about four times this semester. Here, we will discuss any readings and share internship experiences with the entire group. In addition, you may hand in any written assignments, and talk about how current events have shaped your on-the-job experiences.

In addition to our group meetings, I will speak with each student in two (graded) fifteen minute individual meetings -- to be held at the beginning and middle of the semester -- to discuss separate internship experiences. Start planning now for these meetings by e-mailing me to reserve a specific time to talk.

Here is a description of the assignments in greater detail:

Writing Assignments and Presentation

Over the course of the semester, you will have to complete three writing assignments and make one presentation to the class. All written assignments must be typed in 12 pt, Times New Roman (or similar) font, double spaced, and have 1-inch margins.

Assignment 1: Resume and Cover Letter

1 page each

The first assignment is to make sure that you have a concise, error-free resume and cover letter to send to potential internship employers. I will be available to review resumes and cover letters in person or via e-mail. You must place a revised copy of your resume and one cover letter that you have mailed (or will mail) to prospective internship sites into my Dunblane mailbox by 5:00 pm on Friday, January 19 (one week after the Internship Bazaar).

Due: January 19 (final version)

Assignment 2: Weekly Journal

1-2 pages per week

You will keep a regular journal of your internship experiences. Start with the first day of your job search (DO NOT wait until you find an internship to start writing). Make sure to note any information that will help you with your final class assignment (a presentation to

the class -- see below), especially the type of work you did, the people you meet, etc. Think about the different things that occurred and choices that you made. What did you learn about professional life -- and Washington, D.C., in particular -- through these experiences? Did you struggle with anything? If so, what, and why? Did you make friends, or merely job-related “acquaintances”? Does anyone stick out in your mind for good (or bad) reasons? Why? Have any of your experiences spurred interests in other areas? If so, what areas, and how? Do you feel more or less confident now about your choice of a potential college major or career? What changed? Why? Be sure to write clearly and concisely to better show the evolution of your thinking on these and similar questions throughout the semester. Hint: more details usually mean a better grade.

Due: February 19, March 19, April 23

Assignment 3: Analysis of Experience and Planning

3-5 pages

Once your journal and interviews are finished, draw upon them to describe your internship experience. First, explain where you worked and what you did. Then, try to answer these questions: What one experience really sticks out in your mind? Why? What did you struggle with the most? Why? How have these struggles affected your plans for a course of undergraduate -- or graduate -- study? Have your career plans remained the same? Make sure to lay out in as much detail as possible what your future academic goals are, and how you intend to achieve them. If they have changed since the internship, please explain how and why.

Due: April 23

Assignment 4: Presentation

3-5 minutes

The last assignment is to present a summary of your semester-long internship experience to the class. Begin by stating where you completed your internship; describe your main responsibilities; relate the most exciting thing that occurred while you were there; describe the most stressful situation you encountered (and how you dealt with it); and add anything else that you believe is important for the class to hear. This presentation should be at most five minutes in length.

Due: April 23 (2 hour class -- everyone will present on the same day)

Professional Component

A key point to remember while at your internship site is to “be a professional.” Your internship is providing you with a chance to learn how to operate in an office environment, test your classroom skills and theories in a real world environment, and build a network of professional contacts. In exchange for this opportunity, your internship site will most likely require you to perform entry-level professional work. Depending on your particular internship, you may be asked to, for example, stuff envelopes, enter data into computer databases, handle constituent telephone calls or e-mails, “auto-pen” constituent response letters, attend and prepare memoranda summarizing meetings, research questions on the Internet, photo-copy, or some combination thereof. Make sure that you and your internship supervisor are on the same page regarding the work you will perform throughout the semester, and be sure that the internship contract is filled out in detail and is unambiguous. These forms must be signed by you and your

internship supervisor and turned in by January 31. The person who signs the form as your internship supervisor should be your direct supervisor (someone who actually sees your work product).

Some of the tasks your internship employer will ask you to complete may be somewhat tedious at first. You should still attempt to do the best job possible and not grumble about your assignments. Often, such work is used initially to verify the ability of the temporary worker (you) to perform basic tasks before you are assigned more responsibility. Remember, “being a professional” means doing as good a job as possible, regardless of the assignment. Do not forget that the internship site is doing you a great service by allowing you to have “real world” experience.

A minimum of 14 hours of internship site work is required each week, to be performed each Thursday and Friday. Within these guidelines, you will determine your exact schedule with your supervisor. If participation on a special office project at your internship site would require you to work longer hours, you may choose to do so (or choose not to do so). Regardless of your decision, you are not allowed to skip seminars or other courses held Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday in order to put in extra hours at your internship site. Also, you are expected to tell your internship supervisor in advance if you will not be able to work on a particular day, even if the day is a scheduled AU holiday (internship supervisors are not necessarily aware of your school schedule).

You may be faced with minor conflicts at your internship that will require you to exercise your independent professional judgment. Feel free to ask me or a Dean for advice if a situation occurs that is beyond your personal capacity to manage (inappropriate behavior by a supervisor, for example). These occasions are rare, but if a problem arises, please contact me immediately.

Internship Supervisor Assessment (40%)

I will be in touch with your internship supervisor in February to ensure that your internship is proceeding smoothly. Your internship supervisor will receive an evaluation form near the end of the semester to judge your performance. This evaluation form asks the internship supervisor about your on-site performance, and contemplates such factors as your reliability, willingness to start and complete projects, and relationships with co-workers. You should set up regular (either weekly or bi-weekly) meetings with your internship supervisor to make sure that each of you understands the perspective and concerns of the other. You will be asked to evaluate your internship experience at the end of the semester.

Required Textbook

I do not require a textbook for this course. All of the assigned readings will be distributed in class as hard copies or available via Blackboard.

Attendance

You are required to attend each class session, and attendance will be taken during each class. If you must be absent, please let me know ahead of time via e-mail and arrange to get the notes

from one of your classmates. If you arrange to meet with me outside of class, I will expect you to show up on time. If you do not, and fail to notify me ahead of time, this will count as an absence as well.

Miscellaneous Grading Policies

Do not cheat. Period. If I discover cheating on any of the assignments, you will certainly fail that assignment, and quite possibly the entire course. Read the University's Academic Integrity Code, at http://american.edu/handbook/policies_guidelines.htm. You must follow the standards set out by the Code. If you have questions about whether something is academically dishonest, check with me first.

I do not curve grades, nor do I offer extra credit assignments, incompletes, or make-up papers absent extraordinary circumstances, such as serious illness or family emergency, either of which will require you to provide appropriate documentation from the University.

Instructor's Prerogative

I reserve the right to adjust final grades depending on individual factors, including -- but not limited to -- perfect (or inadequate) class attendance, and exceptional (or disappointing) contributions to our discussions.

Class and Assignment Schedule

The following is a tentative schedule for this semester.

Topic, Assignments

Date of Class

1. *Introduction, Resumes and Interview Skills,
Networking and Washington, D.C.*

January 11, 19

**Work on resumes, cover letters -- BOTH DUE JANUARY 19
INTERNSHIP CONTRACT DUE JANUARY 31**

2. *Office Dynamics and Management Styles*

February 19

Readings: TBD

JOURNAL #1 DUE FEBRUARY 19

3. *Law and Graduate School*

March 19

Readings: TBD

JOURNAL #2 DUE MARCH 19

4. *Presentations (2 hour class)*

April 23

***Readings: TBD**

JOURNAL #3 DUE APRIL 23

ANALYSIS OF EXPERIENCE PAPER DUE APRIL 23