

# Public Administration 281

Fall 2009

## INTERNSHIP IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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Office Hours: TTh 1:30-3 and by appointment.

The public administration internship gives students an opportunity to make practical application of what they've learned in classes while gaining experience in their chosen field. Most of the work for the course is done with the placement, but written assignments, individual consultations with the director and some reading are required to ensure that students make analytical connections between classroom and textbook abstractions about public administration and the real thing.

By university policy, grading is credit/no credit. Credit is awarded **only** on completion of **all** (*every one*) of the requirements for the course, including resume, background research on the placement, weekly hours, monthly reports, contract, thesis/research design, attendance at class sessions, regular consultation with the director, and a paper.

Initially, students prepare a brief **resume** to present to the director and the potential placement. This should include previous education, relevant MPA courses completed, grade point average, work experience, volunteer activity, computer program familiarity, languages spoken, etc.

Interns then discuss placements with the director, who will assist in providing contacts for students who have not already arranged a placement for themselves.

Next, students do research on their potential placement and prepare a one-page **background report**. Internet research should suffice. The report should provide basic background on the placement, including the functions of the office and how the head of the organization or department was selected. The background report is required even if the student has already started the internship before registering for the class.

On completion of the resume and background research, students contact their placement, make an appointment and go for an **interview**. If accepted by the placement, the intern and the placement supervisor agree on duties and a work schedule on the contract form available from the director. This must include weekly hours and a starting and ending date providing for a total of 260 hours as well as learning objectives. **Contracts must be submitted to the director by September 10.**

Interns are required to report their work hours, activities and observations **monthly** in a one or two page **summary**. The summaries must be submitted to the intern director by email or in person **by the end of September, October and November.**

Each student must **meet with the director** individually once a month to explain internship activities and discuss any problems that may arise. One of these meetings may occur at the placement when the instructor comes for a visit. Appointments for these consultations should be made when the contract is submitted.

**A thesis/research design** stating what students hope to learn and observe is **due at our October 15 class meeting**. Try to develop one or more hypotheses that can be tested through the internship experience. These should be based on expectations derived from your previous study of public administration. The research design sets guidelines for the end-of-semester paper and should be as scholarly and analytical as possible. Minimally, your research design must set forth some questions about public administration and how you will answer them through your internship.

Your **paper** for the course will be **due on December 10**. This 12-page paper should review, analyze and criticize the fieldwork experience. Summarize what you've done in 2-3 pages (you can quote your monthly written reports), evaluate the placement in 2 pages and devote the remainder of the paper to reporting on your research design.

## READINGS

- Class handout on Research Questions and Participant Observation.
- *The San Jose Mercury News*. Be sure to read "Internal Affairs" Sundays on page 3B.
- Local politics blogs: [www.sanjoserevealed.com](http://www.sanjoserevealed.com) and [www.sanjoseinside.com](http://www.sanjoseinside.com).
- Terry Christensen and Tom Hogen-Esch, *Local Politics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Recommended for interns in city or county government.
- Larry N. Gerston & Terry Christensen, *California Government and Politics*, 10<sup>th</sup> edition—appropriate chapters recommended for particular placements.
- Other readings appropriate to individual placements as suggested by the instructor.

## CLASS MEETINGS

- August 27                      No class session. Students who have not obtained placements should meet with the director.
- September 10 (3 p.m.) Orientation. Read handout on Research Questions and Participant Observation.  
**Contracts due.**
- October 15 (4 pm)          Report. Discuss research designs and San Jose's form of government and budget. Read Chapters 5-8 and 13 of *Local Politics*.
- November 12 (4 pm)      Guest panel on careers in the public sector.  
Concluding discussion.
- December 10                **Papers due to instructor.**