

Political Science 181

Spring 2012

FIELD WORK IN POLITICS

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The political science internship gives students an opportunity to make practical application of what they've learned in classes. Most of the work for the course is done with the placement, but written work, individual consultations with the director and some reading are required to ensure that students make analytical connections between classroom and textbook abstractions about politics 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, contract, 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 major, relevant courses taken, grade point average, work experience, volunteer activity, etc. Students can arrange placements themselves or meet with the director to discuss their interests and be assisted in finding placements. This should take place *before* the semester begins.

Next, students do research on their potential placement and prepare a one-page **background report**. Internet research should suffice for this brief report, which should provide basic background on the placement. In the case of an elected official, this should include partisan affiliation, date of first and next election, constituency data, committee memberships, etc. The background report should be completed *before* students interview with their placements, but even if the placement is assured in advance, a background report must be submitted to the director.

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 should include weekly hours and a starting and ending date providing for a total of 150 hours. **Contracts must be submitted to the director by February 1.**

Interns are required to record 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 **one week before class meetings in March, April and May.**

Each student must **meet with the director** individually once a month (March, April and May) 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. Students who submit good written summaries of monthly activities may be exempted from one or more monthly individual meetings with the director.

A research plan stating what students hope to learn and observe is **due at our March 7 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 the type of politics you will be observing (elected officials, interest groups, bureaucracies, campaigns, etc.). The research plan 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 politics **and** how you will answer them through your internship. Your research will be what you do at your internship; this is not a library research assignment.

Your **paper** for the course will be **due on May 9**. This 10-page paper should review, analyze and critique the fieldwork experience. The heart of the paper should focus on your research questions (see above), but you can also include a description of what you did as an intern, a critique of the placement and advice on how to achieve a successful internship at your placement to future students.

READINGS

- Class handout on Research Questions and Participant Observation (to be distributed by email by the instructor).
- *The San Jose Mercury News*. Be sure to read “Internal Affairs” Sundays on page 3B.
- Larry N. Gerston & Terry Christensen, *California Government and Politics*, 11th edition—appropriate chapters recommended for particular placements will be supplied by the instructor.
- Other readings appropriate to individual placements as suggested by the instructor.

CLASS MEETINGS

January 25	No class session—students without placements meet with director in Clark 457.
February 1	Orientation. Read handout on Research Questions and Participant Observation. Contracts due.
March 7	Discuss activities at placements and research designs. Research designs due.
April 4	Guest panel on public sector careers.
May 9	Final Class Session. Culminating discussion. Papers due to instructor.