

# PS 399-001: INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

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The University of Kentucky's Department of Political Science encourages undergraduates to learn about political science through hands-on experience. Students often respond to this encouragement by seeking internships within government agencies, political campaigns, law firms, and the like. Similarly, to learn about the conduct of actual PS research, students sometimes intern with professors. However, simply working at a job, even a professionally enriching job, does not necessarily contribute to a liberal arts education. On-site supervisors can teach the skills needed to carry out necessary tasks, but there's no guarantee that supervisors will encourage interns to look beyond the job at hand and consider how it fits within something larger.

The Political Science Department's internship course, PS 399, therefore provides students with an opportunity to embed early work experiences within the liberal arts education they are pursuing. To earn credit, students not only must serve in a job with some connection to Political Science, they also must read a modest amount of social-science scholarship related to the internship. They communicate regularly with the Internship Director or another academic advisor within the Political Science department – sometimes to seek advice or guidance, sometimes just to share their progress, but always with the expectation that they will show they are thinking abstractly or scientifically about the job and its techniques. They end by writing a reflective paper connecting their job(s) to the scholarly readings.

Thus, in addition to exhibiting (1) the skills learned on the job and (2) the abstract knowledge gained about their job's niche in society, the course has a third **learning outcome**, which is that students show that (3) as professionals, they can perform a job successfully yet still think critically about the work they are performing.

### ELIGIBLE INTERNSHIPS

The Political Science Department typically lacks the resources to find internships for undergraduates (aside from the research internships that students sometimes negotiate with our own faculty). Students who wish to enroll in PS 399 first must line up work that will qualify under the program. Discretion ultimately rests with the Internship Director, but in general the student's employment must include substantial exposure to political, governmental, or legal institutions and must involve some sort of learning or individual discretion (rather than, for example, simply photocopying, stapling and/or delivering documents). Students receiving internship credit usually take *paid or unpaid employment* with one of the following:

- 1) **government agencies** (whether local, state, or federal, including legislative staff)
- 2) **political parties** or **campaign organizations**
- 3) interest groups or other **policy-related organizations** (e.g., non-profit research)
- 4) **judicial institutions** (whether local, state, or federal)
- 5) law firms and other **legal organizations** (e.g. county attorney's office)
- 6) the **news media** if primarily writing on government or politics
- 7) a **political scientist**, whether professor or advanced grad student, performing research

Students seeking approval of a proposed internship should submit the **Internship Approval Form**, available on the PS department's Web page, to ensure that the job they intend to take will earn sufficient credit. Sometimes the Internship Director will approve allowing students to sign up for PS 399 without submission of that form – for example, based only on an email description of the internship – but students who sign up for the course without having provided all of the information on the Internship Approval Form do so at their own risk. Simply allowing a student to sign up for the course does not guarantee the ability to earn credit.

Students require both an *internship supervisor* (who will assess the on-the-job performance) and an *academic advisor* from among the PS faculty (the person who will assess the academic portion of the course). For a politics/government internship, usually the academic advisor will be the Internship Director, unless

students have a specific faculty member with whom they wish to work or who knows the content of the internship activity especially well. For research internships, usually the supervisor and the advisor will be the same person: the faculty member leading the research.

While students may opt to skip the Internship Approval Form, they may not skip two other required pieces of paperwork: the Memorandum of Agreement, worked out with the internship supervisor, and the Learning Contract, worked out with the academic advisor. Together, these two forms – both available on the department’s Web page – serve as the specific guidelines under which a student is taking PS 399. Students who do not turn in this paperwork at the very beginning of the semester may still be allowed to proceed in PS 399, but they do so at their own risk. **WARNING:** If a student enrolled in PS 399 has not finalized this paperwork by the time Midterm Grades are due, then that’s the equivalent of never really having been in the course, and the Internship Director reserves the right to issue a “N”ever in Course grade that will have PS 399 erased from the student’s record.

No passing grade will be handed out in this course until the Internship Director either (1) has heard from the intern supervisor that the student performed satisfactorily on the job, or (2) has approved a formal appeal from the student that a Passing grade should be assigned despite the silence/opposition of the supervisor. To be eligible, an intern therefore must meet another implicit requirement: taking responsibility for getting the supervisor and the Internship Director in touch with each other so that an evaluation of the intern’s performance can be delivered. It’s wise to ensure in advance that the supervisor will be willing to provide this evaluation.

Students may earn up to six (6) credit hours in PS 399 during a given semester, for a total of no more than 12 credit hours of the 120 required to graduate. The number of possible credits in a given semester depends on how many hours the student will be working at the internship, as well as on the scope of the academic work the student is willing to perform:

<b># of credits</b>	<b>Average hours/week if 15 weeks</b>	<b>Hours per semester</b>	<b># of weekly meetings or emails</b>	<b>Minimum Number of Books to Read</b> <b>3 articles = 1 book</b>	<b>Minimum Length of Final Paper</b>
1	4 hours	60 hours	1 per 3 weeks, or 5 total	1	4
2	7 hours	105 hours	1 per 3 weeks, or 5 total	1	4
3	10 hours	150 hours	1 per 2 weeks, or 7 total	1	5
4	14 hours	210 hours	1 per 2 weeks, or 7 total	2	5
5	17 hours	255 hours	1 per week, or 14 total	2	6
6	20 hours	300 hours	1 per week, or 14 total	2	6

Note that internships do not always accommodate the semester’s academic calendar. As long as a majority of the hours on the job take place during the regularly scheduled semester, the Internship Director may count work performed in the weeks before the session starts when determining the number of credit hours for which a student is eligible. (However, students perform work in advance hoping to receive internship credit do so at their own risk, because the Department only gives formal approval to the Learning Contract and planned course of study when the semester gets underway.) Similarly, if the student can afford to take an "I"ncomplete grade at the end of the semester, the Internship Director has the discretion to count work hours completed after the official semester has ended. Either way, the student still must complete the academic course requirements necessary to earn such credit.

## **ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS**

Intern supervisors will be asked to provide an evaluation for each student at the end of the semester. Students cannot pass without either achieving a favorable evaluation or receiving an official waiver from the Internship Director (which may be necessary if the supervisor will not provide a fair and ethical assessment of the intern’s performance). In addition to the needs of the job itself, PS 399 also has three academic requirements, all of which generally must be met satisfactorily for students to “Pass” (although they may vary in detail, as per the approved Learning Contract):

1. **On-Going Communications:** The student must contact the academic advisor periodically to provide updates on the progress of the internship. The frequency of this required contact depends on the number of credit hours being earned (see above table). Interns should not reveal confidential information about the work they are doing. Instead, they must outline in general terms the kind of tasks they are performing. They also must provide evidence that they are thinking critically about how their experiences fit into something bigger (e.g., ethical systems, social relations, professional norms, the political and legal system, etc.). This reflection can come in the form of questions, generalizations, or specific observations. Students usually meet this requirement through regularly scheduled *electronic mail messages of a few paragraphs*' length, but some advisors may prefer that the written reflection be entered into a journal, and interns also have the option of requesting face-to-face meetings instead.
2. **Required Reading:** The student must read scholarship in social science related to the internship. Ideally, the specific books and articles will be identified by the student and academic advisor in advance of submitting the Learning Contract to the Internship Director. The minimum quantity of reading depends on the number of credit hours (see the above table). Students are encouraged to discuss what they've been reading as part of their "on-going communications" with academic advisors.
3. **Final Paper:** As the end of the internship approaches, the student must submit a final paper of at least 4-6 pages (see the above table), typewritten and double-spaced with one-inch margins and no more than a 12-point font. The paper must connect the scholarly readings to the hands-on experience in some fashion. For example, a student might (a) illustrate points made in the readings with personal examples, (b) criticize the readings by showing how they fail to characterize the internship experience, or (c) analyze as social scientists the organizational efforts in which they participated. Students are welcome to discuss the paper with the academic advisor before the due date, but the final version of the paper must be received by the academic advisor no later than noon on the Friday of exam week.

The **academic standards** for a Pass/Fail course are not excessively difficult to satisfy. However, students should not mistakenly assume that they will pass the internship course automatically as long as their supervisor is satisfied. Interns will not pass the course if they (1) fail to communicate with the academic advisor on schedule and in the reflective fashion required, or (2) fail to turn in a final paper that exhibits adequate familiarity with the academic readings. Also, a reminder: Students who have not finalized the necessary paperwork for PS 399 by the time midterm grades are due should expect to receive a "N"ever in Course grade, which will wipe PS 399 from their records.