

Political Science Internship Program

University of Massachusetts

Spring 2004

I. GENERAL DESCRIPTION

As a means of exposing undergraduates to practical politics and gaining work experience in public affairs, the Department of Political Science sponsors qualified students for internships. The purpose is to augment rather than replace major or minor requirements.

The Department works with the Field Experience Program at the Career Services Office (5-6265). Each student must work with a Field Experience Program Advisor to apply and register for an internship. Students wishing to pursue an internship should understand that arranging one takes time. They should be planned at least one semester in advance. Proposals must be submitted for approval to the Field Experience Program Advisor, Jeff Silver, at least one month before the internship begins.

Interns are normally assigned to a government agency at the federal, state or local level, or with a private organization that works in public affairs. They are supervised by someone in the agency or organization. They perform duties for the agency for a given number of hours per week for a specified period of time. Full-time internships are 40 hours per week for the entire semester, or three summer months. Part-time internships are usually combined with other classes and courses at the university.

Notices of some current internship opportunities are posted on a bulletin board in the Department of Political Science outside of Thompson 330. Additional information is available from the Field Experience Program office. Most internship information can be located using a web search engine such as Google.com. International internships usually require applications at least 6 months in advance. (Boston University and Northeastern both run successful international internship programs.)

II. PREREQUISITES

To be eligible for an internship sponsored by the Department of Political Science a student should have: (a) earned at least 60 graduation credits, (b) completed at least one political science course, (c) an overall GPA of at least 2.5, and (d) an overall Political Science GPA of 2.8. Eligibility is not limited to Political Science majors or minors. The program is open to all students who believe they would benefit academically through an internship sponsored by a faculty member in the Department of Political Science.

III. ACADEMIC CREDIT

Internships must have a genuine academic purpose and serious academic content to be eligible for credits. The academic content of the internship may be demonstrated in a number of ways, but usually some or all of the following are involved: readings, book reports, research papers, policy reports, and the keeping of a daily or weekly journal.

Students enrolling in an internship sponsored by the Department of Political Science may register for UMass 298Y (Practicum) for up to 12 ungraded (pass/fail) graduation credits. These credits will not count toward a major or minor in Political Science.

In addition to the ungraded credits, students may – with the approval of a faculty sponsor – enroll in Political Science 483 (Public Service), for 3 graded credits. This course will require special reading, research and writing.

One graded internship or one graded Independent Study may be counted as an elective course toward satisfying the requirements for a Political Science major or minor. The graded credits should be closely related to the work of the ungraded internship and must involve substantial writing and/or study of a nature subject to academic evaluation.

Students enrolling in UMass 298Y for fewer than 7 credits must also take a pre-course or a post-course in Political Science. Students enrolling in UMass 298Y for 7 or more credits must complete both a pre-course and a post-course in Political Science. The pre-course and post-course should be closely related to the internship placement and must be approved by the faculty sponsor. Political Science 483, Public Service, may not be used as a pre-course or a post-course.

IV. CONTRACT

Prospective interns are required to develop a detailed contract which spells out in clear and specific terms the (a) purpose of the internship, (b) duration, (c) academic content, (d) work products, e.g., papers, journals, research reports, (d) pre-course and/or post-course in Political Science to fulfill the internship requirement. There should be 4 copies of the contract: one for the intern, one for the faculty sponsor, one for the department coordinator (Prof. La Raja) and one for the Field Experience Program office (Jeff Silver)

V. STEPS FOR ARRANGING AN INTERNSHIP

1. Contact Professor Ray La Raja in Thompson 330 during office hours (laraja@polsci.umass.edu) to discuss internship opportunities, search strategies, and to establish academic eligibility.
2. Attend an orientation “welcome meeting” on either Mondays or Thursdays at 3 p.m., or Tuesdays at 10 a.m. (except the first Tuesday of the month) in the Career Service Center (across from Newman Center) to learn about the application process, explore internship opportunities, read reports of past internship experiences and prepare a resume.
3. Meet with Jeff Silver, the Field Experience Program Advisor, to apply for an internship position.
4. Secure an appropriate academic sponsor among the Political Science faculty. Normally, this will be a former teacher.
5. Meet all scheduled dates and deadlines for applications (if these are necessary).
6. Negotiate an internship with the desired agency, including duties and conditions of employment.
7. Complete an internship contract (form available at the Field Experience Office) with your faculty sponsor. Provide copies to the appropriate individuals (see Contract section above). The contract should be approved by the Field Experience Program Advisor at least one month before an internship begins.
8. Make suitable living arrangements, if moving out of the area.