

**CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY GOVERNMENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM
FALL 2008
UH POLS 4390/4398 – UH-D SOS 4380**

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Center for Public Policy's Local Government Internship Program offers students the opportunity to experience the political office environment in the Houston area. Government interns work an average of 8 hours per week during the 15-week semester in the office of an elected official at the municipal, county, state or federal levels or on a campaign. Intern responsibilities may vary, depending on the intern's professional experience and interests as well as the needs of the office.

The primary objectives of the Local Government Internship Program include:

- Providing students the opportunity to gain first-hand experience working in government and politics.
- Generating insight into the realities of the political process, and how it relates to traditional theoretical perspectives of political science.
- Educating students about the possibilities of public service and politics as a career choice.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will master basic concepts, theories and methods of studying political institutions and political behavior. They will also gain knowledge of contemporary political issues.
- Students will locate relevant sources to support their arguments; they will be able to properly cite sources; and they will be able to analyze and present quantitative data when appropriate.
- Students will write clear and original papers that are directed to the appropriate audience.

SUGGESTED READING

Reeher, Grant and Mack Mariani. 2002. *The Insider's Guide to Political Internships*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

Texas Politics:

Langenegger, Joyce A., Lyle C. Brown, Sonia R. Garcia, and Ted Lewis. 2004. *Practicing Texas Politics – A Brief Survey*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Houston Politics:

Thomas, Robert D. and Richard W. Murray. 1991. *Progrowth Politics: Change and Governance in Houston*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Campaigns & Elections: www.campaignline.com
Governing: www.governing.com
Greater Houston Partnership: www.houston.org
Harris County: www.co.harris.tx.us
City of Houston: www.houstontx.gov
Houston League of Women Voters: www.lwvhouston.org/
JSTOR: www.jstor.org/
Texas Legislature Online: www.capitol.state.tx.us
United States Census Bureau: www.census.gov
United States Senate: www.senate.gov
United States House of Representatives: www.house.gov

CLASS DATES

Orientation: Friday, August 29, 1:00 – 4.00 PM, Heyne Building, room 135: Interns will receive a general overview of what to expect while working in a political environment along with instructions on the written requirements for the course including the term paper. A former intern will speak to the class about her experience as an intern and as a city council aide. Interns will receive their office assignments with all pertinent contact information.

Class 2: Friday, October 3, 1:00 – 4.00 PM, Heyne Building, room 135: Class participation will include a brief oral description about each intern's experience, completion of a survey, and a discussion led by a guest speaker.

Class 3: Friday, November 7, 1:00 – 4.00 PM, Heyne Building, room 135: Discussion of the 2008 election results. Class participation will include a discussion of internship experiences and a question and answer session with an elected official and/or political consultant.

Final class: Friday, December 5, 1:00 – 3.00 PM, Heyne Building, room 135: Your journal is due. Class participation will include completion of a survey and a wrap up class discussion of the semester.

GRADING POLICY

UHD students: See Dr Branham's UHD syllabus for the applicable grading policy.

UH students: Grades are based on the following components:

Term Paper (50%): See below for details. **Due November 14.**

Supervisor's evaluation (25%): Your office supervisor will evaluate your performance including aspects such as initiative, dependability, and ability to work with others. The Center for Public Policy office will forward the form to your supervisor.

Journal (15%): The journal is a record of your internship experience. Include details such as what sort of projects you worked on, meetings or events that you attended, what type of research you completed, etc. The final entry should include:

- An explanation of whether the "real world" of politics and public service turned out to be as you expected or as illustrated by popular culture; and
- A discussion of whether or not your internship sparked a further interest in politics and why.

The journal must be typed – no exceptions. The journal is due at the last internship session on Friday, December 5.

Class participation & additional assignments (10%): Absenteeism or non-participation in the class sessions can result in the loss of one letter grade in your overall course grade. You are expected to engage in all class discussions as well as ask questions of the featured speaker(s). This is your opportunity to ask public officials questions regarding policy (perhaps about your paper topic), what spurred them into public service, why they voted the way they did on a particular issue, etc.

THE TERM PAPER

Your term paper is due Friday, November 14, by 5:00 PM.

Select a policy issue that is on the forefront of your office's agenda. For example, one current hot button issue is the use of light rail in Houston. Is your assigned official, candidate or organization advocating or opposing the expansion of light rail? The topic choices are abundant but make sure your paper has a local focus. If you decide to write about the U.S. policies surrounding immigration for example, make sure your paper focuses on how the legislation affects Houston area residents.

Write a one paragraph proposal describing the policy issue and likely sources. **Submit your proposal to your instructor no later than October 3** (during the second class session). A late proposal will be subject to points deducted from the final paper.

Your research should include a minimum of 2 interviews with elected officials, legislative or policy aides, and/or community leaders involved in the specific issue. The interviews can be completed in person, by phone or through electronic correspondence. No exceptions will be made regarding the interviews so do not wait until the last moment to complete the interviews.

"A" papers will also include *at least one academic source* from scholarly books or articles from academic journals. **If you want to make an "A", you must include an academic component.**

If you are unfamiliar with J-Stor, an extensive database of online academic articles, seek information about this invaluable resource through the UH/UHD libraries. Other secondary sources such as newspapers and magazines may be used but do not constitute an academic source.

Describe the issue in detail by addressing the following:

- Explain the issue, including a brief historical perspective.
- Who is for it? Who is against it?
- Interview your public official/candidate/organization leader about the issue.
- Interview an official or community leader with an opposing view.
- What tactics are being used to promote or deter public opinion?
- Discuss what you consider the issue/policy's strong and weak points.
- What would you add to the proposed legislation/ordinance?
- What is the cost if it is or is not implemented?
- Will the issue/legislation ultimately become law? Why or why not?

You may include other information relating to your policy topic – just make sure you address all the bulleted items above.

The paper should be a *minimum of 10 pages* (typed, double-spaced, no larger than 12 point font, and no greater than 1" margins). Please number your pages, and do not try to be creative with word processing features to make your papers appear lengthier. Longer papers are fine, but should be well edited. When citing sources, use a consistent format (whether it is MLA, APA or APSA).

You will receive additional guidelines for the paper at the October 3 meeting.

RETURNING INTERNS: You may deviate from the standard paper format; however you must submit a brief proposal of your plans by October 3.

UH students: Submit your paper at 104 Heyne, or email it to rcross@uh.edu. If you email it, you will receive a confirmation email – if you don't receive a confirmation, the paper was not received. *Ensure that your name is on the paper* – not just the email – and number your pages. Points will be deducted from *all* late papers.

UH-D students: Submit your paper at N1066 or in the Social Sciences Department. You can also email your paper to branhamd@uhd.edu.

Remember, your term paper is due Friday, November 14, by 5:00 PM. Late papers will be penalized.

REQUIRED: *Work hard, learn a lot, and have fun as a government intern!*