

**SAMPLE ONLY**

**CIVIC HOUSTON INTERNSHIP PROGRAM (CHIP)  
GOVERNMENT INTERNSHIP POLS 4390/4398, POLC 4390/4398 • FALL 2023**

Instructor: Renée Cross, MLA  
Office: Bates Law, Rm 102A  
Office hours: Monday – Friday by appointment  
rcross@uh.edu / 713 743 3972

Program Director: Jessica Ruland, MPP  
Office: Bates Law, 5G  
Office hours: Monday–Friday by appointment  
jruland@cougarnet.uh.edu / 713 743 0196

Civic Houston Internship Program: [www.uh.edu/hobby/interns/chip](http://www.uh.edu/hobby/interns/chip)  
Hobby School of Public Affairs: [www.uh.edu/hobby](http://www.uh.edu/hobby)  
Department of Political Science: [uh.edu/class/political-science](http://uh.edu/class/political-science)

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The Civic Houston Internship Program (CHIP) offers students an introduction to public service in a professional environment in the Houston area. CHIP interns work an average of 8 hours per week during the semester in the office of an elected official at the municipal, county, state or federal levels, with a non-profit organization 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 Civic Houston Internship Program include the following:

- Provide the opportunity to gain professional experience working in public service, government and politics
- Generate insight into the realities of the political process and how it relates to traditional theoretical perspectives of political science
- Introduce the possibilities of public service and politics as a career choice

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Students will learn basic concepts and theories about civic engagement.
- Students will gain knowledge of political issues and ways people can influence and become engaged in government and the community.
- Students will write clear and original papers.

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Hobby School of Public Affairs Research: [www.uh.edu/hobby/research](http://www.uh.edu/hobby/research)  
Houston Matters (88.7 FM): [www.houstonpublicmedia.org/shows/houston-matters](http://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/shows/houston-matters)  
Texas Tribune: [www.texastribune.org](http://www.texastribune.org)  
Houston Chronicle: [www.chron.com](http://www.chron.com)

## **CLASS DATES**

**Orientation: Friday, August 25, 1:00–4:00 PM, Bates Law, Heritage Room:** Interns will receive a general overview of what to expect while working in a political environment along with instructions for the written requirements including the research or project paper and the activity journal. Interns will receive their office assignment including their contact person.

**Class 2: Friday, September 29, 1:00–4:00 PM, Bates Law, Heritage Room:** Class participation will include a brief oral description about each intern's office experience and completion of a survey. Harris County Commissioner Lesley Briones will be the guest speaker (see <https://hcp4.net/commissioner/>). Be prepared to ask questions about public service and public policy in Harris County and Texas.

**Class 3: Friday, October 27, 1:00–4:00 PM, Bates Law, Heritage Room:** Class participation will include a discussion about the November 7 City of Houston election and completion of a survey. A guest speaker is will join the session.

**Final class: Friday, December 1, 1:00–2:30 PM, Bates Law, Heritage Room:** Class participation will include an exit survey and general discussion.

## **UH POLICIES & RESOURCES**

### **Excused Absence**

Regular class attendance, participation, and engagement in coursework are important contributors to student success. Absences may be excused as provided in the University of Houston Undergraduate Excused Absence Policy and Graduate Excused Absence Policy for reasons including: medical illness of student or close relative, death of a close family member, legal or government proceeding that a student is obligated to attend, recognized professional and educational activities where the student is presenting, and University-sponsored activity or athletic competition. Under these policies, students with excused absences will be provided with an opportunity to make up any quiz, exam or other work that contributes to the course grade or a satisfactory alternative. Please read the full policy for details regarding reasons for excused absences, the approval process, and extended absences. Additional policies address absences related to military service, religious holy days, pregnancy and related conditions, and disability.

### **Recording of Class**

Students may not record all or part of class, livestream all or part of class, or make/distribute screen captures, without advanced written consent of the instructor. If you have or think you may have a disability such that you need to record class-related activities, please contact the Center for Students with DisABILITIES. If you have an accommodation to record class-related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, or with any other person or on any other platform. Classes may be recorded by the instructor. Students may use instructor's recordings for their own studying and notetaking. Instructor's recordings are not authorized to be shared with *anyone* without the prior written approval of the instructor. Failure to comply with requirements regarding recordings will result in a disciplinary referral to the Dean of Students Office and may result in disciplinary action.

### **Resources for Online Learning**

The University of Houston is committed to student success and provides information to optimize the online learning experience through our Power-On website. Please visit this website for a comprehensive set of resources, tools, and tips including obtaining access to the internet, AccessUH, and Blackboard; requesting a laptop through the Laptop Loaner Program; using your smartphone as a webcam; and downloading Microsoft Office 365 at no cost. For questions or assistance contact UHOnline@uh.edu.

### **Honor Code Statement**

Students may be asked to sign an honor code statement as part of their submission of any graded work including but not limited to projects, quizzes, and exams: *"I understand and agree to abide by the provisions in the (select: University of Houston Undergraduate Academic Honesty Policy, University of Houston Graduate Academic Honesty Policy). I understand that academic honesty is taken very seriously and, in the cases of violations, penalties may include suspension or expulsion from the University of Houston."*

### **Helpful Information**

COVID-19 Updates: <https://uh.edu/covid-19/>

Coogs Care: <https://www.uh.edu/dsaes/coogscare/>

Laptop Checkout Requests: <https://www.uh.edu/infotech/about/planning/off-campus/index.php#do-you-need-a-laptop>

Health FAQs: <https://uh.edu/covid-19/faq/health-wellness-prevention-faqs/>

Student Health Center: <https://uh.edu/class/english/lcc/current-students/student-health-center/index.php>

## GRADING POLICY

Grades are calculated on the following university level scale:

A	100-93	B	86-83	C	76-73	D	66-63
A-	92-90	B-	82-80	C-	72-70	D-	62-60
B+	89-87	C+	79-77	D+	69-67	F	59-0

Grades are based on the following components:

**Term Paper & Volunteer Project (30% + 20%) OR Optional Research Paper (50%):** See below for details. **DUE ON FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10, BY MIDNIGHT VIA CANVAS.**

**Supervisor's evaluation (20%):** Your office supervisor will evaluate your performance including aspects such as initiative, dependability and ability to work with others. Ms. Ruland will send your supervisor the URL to access the evaluation.

**Journal (20%):** 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 journal should be a narrative (full sentences and paragraphs). Do not use bulleted phrases. **DUE FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1, BY MIDNIGHT VIA CANVAS.**

The journal entry for each week (whether it is for two half days or one full day) spent in the office should be approximately ½ to one page, *which is a minimum of 7 pages total for the semester.*

***The final journal entry should include the following (this section is worth 15 points):***

1. 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
2. A discussion of whether or not your internship sparked a further interest in public service and why.

**The journal is due on December 1 by midnight via Canvas.**

**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 or industry leaders questions regarding public policy, what spurred them into public service, why they voted a certain way, etc. An excused absence will be allowed only under documentable and exceptional circumstances (such as an illness with a doctor's excuse).

## TERM PAPER – 2 OPTIONS

### OPTION 1: MAYORAL CAMPAIGN PROJECT (20%) & PAPER (30%)

On November 7, 2023, Houston voters will have the opportunity to vote for mayor, controller and district and at-large council positions. The question remains of how many Houstonians will actually go to the polls.

In November 2015, the voter turnout in Harris County (Houston and other municipalities) was 20.51%. For the Houston mayoral race — the last time there was an open mayoral position in Houston — the turnout was 27.45%. Among voters 18-24 years of age, only 8% participated in the 2015 election. Will the 2023 election turnout be any different?

## TERM PAPER & VOLUNTEER HOURS

The Hobby School of Public Affairs' voter participation project contains 2 components: 1) volunteer work on a mayoral campaign, and 2) a 5 page paper.

CHIP interns who choose the voter participation project option (instead of the research paper as outlined in Option 2) must complete the following:

1. **Complete 10 hours of supervised volunteer work on a Houston mayoral campaign and voting projects.**

Review the various Houston mayoral candidates. There are more than a dozen contenders vying for mayor with prominent candidates (in terms of name identification, early polling support, media coverage and/or fundraising success) including former council member Jack Christie, Council Member Robert Gallegos, former METRO chair Gilbert Garcia, Lee Kaplan, former council member MJ Khan, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee and state Senator John Whitmire. Select a candidate who interests you and contact the campaign to volunteer. Most campaign websites provide online forms for volunteers (keep in mind that campaign staff are frequently busy so contacting them by phone may be necessary).

**A minimum of 4 of the 10 required hours must be on a mayoral campaign.** The additional hours may be completed on a supervised voter registration project through organizations such as the League of Women Voters-Houston, BakerRipley and Houston in Action. Example: 6 hours on a mayoral campaign and 4 hours with the LWV voter registration drive = 10 hours

It is the intern's responsibility to research the opportunities offered by the numerous campaigns and schedule their volunteer hours.

A volunteer participation form to track your volunteer hours and to get the necessary supervisory signatures is enclosed in your orientation packet and will be posted on Canvas.

## 2. Paper.

In addition to the 10 volunteer hours, CHIP interns will write a 5 page paper about the 2023 Houston mayoral election. Sources may include information found in academic literature and governmental records such as voting data (harrisvotes.com; ballotpedia.org, etc), the Houston Chronicle, Houston Matters (88.7 FM) as well as observations made during the volunteer work.

Aspects to include when writing the paper:

- Who do you think is the best person to run the nation's 4th largest city? *Thoroughly explain why.*
- What issues (discuss up to 3) are the most important for Houston's future success? Hint: See the Hobby School's July 2023 survey at <https://uh.edu/hobby/houston2023/> and the latest Kinder Institute survey at <https://kinder.rice.edu/research/kinder-houston-area-survey-2023-results>.
- Did the Houston mayoral race or any other races have an impact on voter turnout? Explain.
- Describe your campaign experience. Did the experience encourage or discourage future voter participation?

The voter registration volunteer form (record of hours with supervisor's signature) and the 5 page paper are due on Friday, November 10. **Submit your term paper and volunteer form(s) on Canvas by midnight on November 10.** Multiple volunteer forms must be combined in one file. **Late papers and forms will lose 5 points per day.**

### OPTION 2: THE TRADITIONAL TERM PAPER (50%)

**Your term paper is due on Friday, November 10, by midnight via Canvas.**

Select a policy issue that is on the forefront of your office's agenda. For example, one highly debated issue in Houston is the widening of I-45. Is your assigned official, candidate or organization advocating or opposing the widening of I-45? The topic choices are abundant but make sure your paper has a *local* focus in terms of the topic and decision-making.

Write a one paragraph proposal describing the policy issue and likely sources including interviewees. **Email your proposal to Renée Cross no later than September 11.** *A late proposal will be subject to points deducted from the final paper.*

Your research should include primary sources including a **minimum of two interviews with topic experts**, which could include elected officials, legislative or policy aides, professors and/or community leaders involved in the specific issue you choose. The interviews can be completed in person or by phone. Email interviews are acceptable IF the interviewee has asked to complete the interview by electronic correspondence. Email interviews are solely for the convenience of the person being interviewed, not for the convenience of the student. No exceptions will be made regarding the interviews so do not wait until the last moment to complete the interviews.

**Note: Do not pick a topic that makes it difficult for you to identify opposing views and/or interviewees.**

“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 UH’s extensive database of online academic articles, seek information about this invaluable resource through the UH library. 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 ensure you address all the bulleted items above.*

**The paper should be a minimum of 15 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 longer. Longer papers are acceptable but should be well edited. When citing sources, use a consistent format (whether it is MLA, APA, Chicago or APSA). Remember, **your term paper is due on Friday, November 10**, by midnight via Canvas. Late papers will be penalized with a loss of 5 points per day.

**SHOW US WHAT YOU ARE DOING AS A CIVIC HOUSTON INTERN!** We post photos and information about CHIP activities throughout the semester on the Hobby School website and social media. Email photos and a brief description (names of people, event, etc.) to Celeste Zamora at [cczamora@central.uh.edu](mailto:cczamora@central.uh.edu) and/or to Jessica Ruland at [jluland@cougarnet.uh.edu](mailto:jluland@cougarnet.uh.edu).

**Follow the Hobby School at [www.uh.edu/hobby](http://www.uh.edu/hobby) and on social media:**

[facebook.com/hobbyschooluh](https://facebook.com/hobbyschooluh)

[twitter.com/hobbyschooluh](https://twitter.com/hobbyschooluh)

[instagram.com/hobbyschooluh](https://instagram.com/hobbyschooluh)

[youtube.com/user/HCPPatUH](https://youtube.com/user/HCPPatUH)

[linkedin.com/company/hobbyschooluh](https://linkedin.com/company/hobbyschooluh)



**Hobby School of Public Affairs**  
UNIVERSITY OF **HOUSTON**