

LA 495:  
Political Science Internship  
Pennsylvania State University  
Political Science  
Fall 2014

## Contact Information

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**Office Hours:** Wednesday, 2:00-5:00 or by appointment

## Course Description

Internships offer the opportunity to gain practical experience in a desired field as well as reinforce and supplement academic coursework. LA 495 is a one-semester course for students doing internships related to Political Science.<sup>1</sup> This course is designed to combine your experiences working in fields such as government, law, public policy, interest advocacy, and international relations among others, with coursework that ties your internship back to the broader study of politics.

This is an academic course. We do not have formal meeting times, but you are responsible for working on your own to complete the required assignments and fulfill your internship obligations. Students are individually responsible for locating and securing their own internships as well as making satisfactory progress on their coursework. To enroll in LA 495 students must complete an application online and have it approved by the internship instructor. You may register for a variable number of credits, although only 3 hours can be used for your major requirements in Political Science or International Politics. If you wish to apply these credit hours to your International Politics degree requirements, double-check with your advisor prior to enrolling that your experience will count toward the degree. Not all internships qualify for credit in International Politics.

## Learning Goals

The purpose of LA 495 is to integrate academic and experiential learning through internship opportunities. After completing this course you will gain the experience of working in a field related to political science and a greater appreciation for the relevant academic material. Specifically, by the end of your internship experience and this course you should:

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<sup>1</sup>A separate course exists for students participating in Penn State's Washington Program.

1. Develop a reflective and critical understanding of work-life at your internship
2. Identify, explain, and synthesize concepts and theories from the political science or international politics disciplines relevant to your internship

## Course Requirements

This course will be administered through the ANGEL course management system. The number of credit hours you are allowed to earn is determined by your workload and the discretion of the internship instructor. While most will seek three credits, additional assignments can be added if more hours are sought. Below is the expected workload (in *clock* hours) for each credit hour desired:

Number of Credits	Number of Work Hours
1	50
2	100
3	150
4	200
5	250
6	300

Grades in this course will be determined by your performance on four assignments: a set of essays in which you will *Apply Your Work*, a portfolio of assignments *Exploring the Career*, time sheets, and evaluations. The following formula will be used to calculate your final course grade:<sup>2</sup>

Applying Your Work	40%
Exploring the Career	40%
Time Sheets	10%
Evaluations	10%

We will use the following grading scale:

Letter	Percent
A	94 to 100
A-	90 to 93
B+	87 to 89
B	83 to 86
B-	80 to 82
C+	76 to 79
C	70 to 75
D	60 to 69
F	59 and below

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<sup>2</sup>This assumes you are earning three hours of credit or less. If you are taking the course for more than three credits contact the instructor for information about additional assignments and an alternative grade formula.

**Applying Your Work:** The primary goal of this course is to grow your ability to link and apply lessons learned in the classroom to careers and questions encountered outside the walls of Penn State. Over the course of the semester you will craft four brief essays explicitly discussing the relationship between your major and the “real world.” Each of the assignments is discussed below and the due date for each can be found in the course schedule. As always, make sure to use in-text citations where appropriate (APA style preferred) and include a bibliography/works cited page.

- **Establishing Expectations:** As you begin your internship, write a memo outlining the experiences you are likely to have and concepts and theories from the major that might be useful. In no more than two paragraphs explain your job and the tasks you will be expected to complete. Next, identify and discuss at least three ideas or theories from your political science or international politics coursework that will be relevant to this work. Each description should be well-developed with the final document about 2-3 pages in length. (*Due September 1*)
- **What’s Been Written?** Taking a task or problem from your internship, review the scholarly literature and identify five relevant journal articles.<sup>3</sup> Read this research and craft a report summarizing the results in a way that informs the task you have been completing or helps answer your question. Your final draft should synthesize (not list) the results of the articles, explaining how their results help answer your question. While there is not an explicit page limit, I would expect this assignment to be about 4-6 pages in length. (*Due October 1*)
- **Can It Be Done Better?** Craft a memo (about 3-4 pages in length) discussing an aspect of your internship experience that your study of political science or international politics could help improve.<sup>4</sup> If you believe your organization is doing everything well, craft a document defending this position (explain how they’re doing everything right). (*Due November 3*)
- **Exit Interview:** As you conclude your internship write a memo reflecting on your experiences and how these pertain to your coursework in political science or international politics. In no more than three paragraphs explain the work you completed over the semester. Next, identify and explain at least two concepts or theories from the discipline that corresponded with these tasks. Finally, in 2-3 paragraphs provide advice to students who may be undertaking this internship in the future – what courses should they take and topics should they work to understand? How does this internship help them better understand their major? (*Due December 1*)

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<sup>3</sup>Examples of tasks or problems may include: How do we get people to vote for us? How does the US strengthen its relationship with other nations? Why do lawyers win some cases and lose others? What causes some bills to fail and others to succeed?

<sup>4</sup>For example, the literature might suggest that candidates should spend less time talking with people who both already support them and are likely to turn out or that lawmakers should work harder to form alliances with committee and party leaders if they want their legislation to succeed.

**Exploring the Career:** The second goal of this course is to provide you with assignments encouraging you to critically evaluate the field in which you are working and capitalize on the experiences you have been afforded. You will develop and submit a portfolio of assignments exploring what a career in this field entails and what is necessary for you to achieve your future goals. The four components of this portfolio can be submitted any time throughout the semester, but all portions must be completed by December 12<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 p.m. EST. Your completed portfolio will include:

- **Career Interview & Essay Summary:** Seek-out and interview a high-level individual in your career field of interest. Use this opportunity to learn how they achieved their position and the advice they have for people pursuing similar career tracks. You should ask this person a variety of questions about their background experiences, what they enjoy the most/least about their jobs, their future aspirations, what they value in employees and job candidates, and how to get started in the field. Remember, this is your interview – ask questions that are valuable and interesting to you.

After the interview, write a 4 to 6 page summary of your conversation. This essay should be more than a transcript of your interview, but should discuss why you chose this person to interview, how you conducted the interview, the insights you gained from the conversation, how this person’s answers matched your expectations of the field, how you might be able to use this conversation as a starting point in the career field, and any other reflections you have on the interview.

- **Potential Jobs Directory:** Compile a directory of 10 positions you are interested in holding.<sup>5</sup> For each position list the name of the company/organization, the title of the position, any experience required (or preferred) for the job, and the salary. If no salary is listed for the position, do a little research to determine the average for similar jobs. Also include a couple sentences discussing why you would like this position and how well you match their stated expectations.
- **Updated Résumé:** Include an updated résumé with your internship experience listed. If you expect to be on the job market soon, this is a good opportunity for you to take some time to develop a well-designed document. Penn State Career Services can provide you with help crafting documents for specific jobs and assist you in your job hunt.
- **Collection of Business Cards:** To encourage you to use your internship as an opportunity to “network,” please compile a collection of business cards from individuals you meet while completing your work. From this collection, choose your 8 best business cards to copy and submit. With each business card, provide a short description of where and when you met this person and how this contact could be important to your network.

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<sup>5</sup>These may be items you are qualified for right now or positions you aspire to hold in the future. The purpose of this assignment is to prompt your thinking about what is necessary to reach your goals – choose positions that are relevant to your aspirations.

**Time Sheets:** You are required to submit time sheets on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month.<sup>6</sup> Note on these forms every day you worked and the number of hours spent on the internship. You will earn full credit for this portion of your grade if you submit the forms on-time and complete the required number of hours to gain credit for the course.

**Evaluations:** Toward the end of the semester both you and your supervisor will complete evaluations of the internship. I will provide an evaluation form to you to be completed by your supervisor. You will also be asked to write an evaluation of the organization you worked for, highlighting the positive and negative aspects of the experience. Your supervisor should discuss your evaluation with you, but I do not require that you share your assessment with your supervisor. You will earn full credit for this portion of your grade if both you and your supervisor complete the evaluations and if you have performed in a satisfactory manner on the job.

## Other Important Notes

**Be Flexible:** While this syllabus represents an agreement between you, the student, and me, the instructor, I reserve the right to revise and modify any parts herein. Situations beyond either of our control may emerge causing us to change the original plan this document puts forth.

**Academic Dishonesty:** The Department of Political Science, along with the College of the Liberal Arts and the University, takes violations of academic dishonesty seriously. Observing basic honesty in one's work, words, ideas, and actions is a principle to which all members of the community are required to subscribe.

All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless an instructor clearly states that an alternative is acceptable. Any reference materials used in the preparation of any assignment must be explicitly cited. Students uncertain about proper citation are responsible for checking with their instructor.

In an examination setting, unless the instructor gives explicit prior instructions to the contrary, whether the examination is in class or take home, violations of academic integrity shall consist but are not limited to any attempt to receive assistance from written or printed aids, or from any person or papers or electronic devices, or of any attempt to give assistance, whether the one so doing has completed his or her own work or not.

Lying to the instructor or purposely misleading any Penn State administrator shall also constitute a violation of academic integrity.

In cases of any violation of academic integrity it is the policy of the Department of Political Science to follow procedures established by the College of the Liberal Arts. More

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<sup>6</sup>If the 1<sup>st</sup> happens to fall on a weekend, your time sheets should be submitted the following week.

information on academic integrity and procedures followed for violation can be found at: <http://laus.la.psu.edu/current-students/academics/academic-integrity/college-policies>

**Note to students with disabilities:** Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at 814-863-1807 (V/TTY). For further information regarding ODS, please visit the Office for Disability Services Web site at <http://equity.psu.edu/ods/>. Instructors should be notified as early in the semester as possible regarding the need for reasonable accommodations.

## Course Schedule

Based on your individual internships we may agree to modify the following due dates, but unless otherwise stated these are the relevant deadlines for the course. All assignments are due by 11:59:59pm EST on the dates listed.

### August

*No Assignments Due*

### September

**Sept. 1:** August Time Sheets Due  
Establishing Expectations Memo Due

### October

**Oct. 1:** September Time Sheets Due  
What's Been Written Assignment Due

### November

**Nov. 3:** October Time Sheets Due  
Can It Be Done Better Assignment Due

### December

**Dec. 1:** November Time Sheets Due  
Exit Interview Assignment Due  
**Dec. 12:** December Time Sheets Due  
Exploring the Career Portfolio Due  
Student & Employer Evaluations Due