

URBS 498.03
URBAN STUDIES INTERNSHIPS
Hunter College

Department of Urban Affairs and Planning
Professor S. Shipp

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. High quality work performance. As an intern, you will work for a company or other organization to gain knowledge and experience. You should be aware that you represent the university to the larger community and the impression you create will have long-lasting effects for yourself, the organization, and on this internship program. Consequently, the main objective of your internship is **conscientious performance** of the tasks defined by you and your internship supervisor. This is known as due diligence--the hard (often tiring) work--that is required to achieve success.

2. Enriched academic learning. The internship is part of an academic curriculum for the urban studies major will supplement the theory learned from books and in the classroom with "in the field" or learning from practical experience. This learning requires you to become not only a responsible staff person but also a participant observer. That is, to observe continually and closely as you are participating and to reflect continually on what you are observing. You should ask yourself, how does this internship relate to your broader academic and professional interests? This requires you to go beyond the basic job requirements and do such things as read material available in the office, attend meetings, seek out opportunities for discussion with your co-workers, and so on. Finally, it requires you to articulate your observations and analysis both in the internship seminar and in the written assignments.

You must ask yourself repeatedly, and be prepared to discuss both in your journals and in the seminar, questions such as:

- What am I learning about in this situation?
- What is the significance of this event in relation to some broader perspective? What does it show us about, for instance, politics, "bureaucracy," city planning, affordable housing, sustainability, etc. It is up to you to develop the broader perspective.
- How does it relate to theories and ideas discussed in classes and readings? Does it reinforce or challenge them?

3. Professional development. The internship allows you to develop knowledge, skills, and personal contacts which will contribute to your own career development. It offers you the opportunity to see how you like working in the field/organization of your choice, to obtain some of that critical experience which so many jobs require, to learn about the employment in urban-related fields. Properly utilized, the internship can be invaluable by introducing you to professionals who can provide recommendations and developing your own network of contacts that will help you gain access to this field if you choose to pursue it further.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- (1) **Fieldwork:** at least 8 hours a week for 15 weeks (or the equivalent, for a minimum total of 120 hours)
- (2) **Seminars:** 2 hours every other week
- (3) **Short Writing Assignments:** Further guidelines discussed below
- (4) **Final Written/Oral Presentation:** Further guidelines discussed below

COURSE COMPONENTS:

- (1) **Seminars:** The seminar meets every other week for two hours. The purpose of the seminar is to allow you to learn from each other. Sharing your observations as participants and developing connections between these observations and the broader issues addressed in your academic curriculum is the most important function. Helping each other develop strategies for dealing with problems and getting the most out of the experience is also important. Finally, the seminar offers an extraordinary opportunity to learn about different types of organizations and career opportunities.
- (2) **Short Written Assignments.** There will be two short papers that students will complete (Discussed below). These papers should be no more than four pages in length. Students will make oral presentations about these short papers.
- (3) **Final Oral and Written Presentations:** Students will prepare a power point presentation as a final oral presentation. A final paper—no more than 7 pages in length--based on the oral presentation will be completed. Each of these final activities is fully discussed below.

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All written assignments must be typewritten, double-spaced, and use 12 point font. Papers must be handed in. I don't accept e-mailed papers. Hard copy form is the only acceptable method of delivery. Papers must be received on or before the deadline. Late papers will be penalized.

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

Class 1 –January 29

Course overview; discussion of placements; and selecting meeting dates.

Class 2 –February 19

Professional Development: Resume and cover letter format, interviewing techniques, business etiquette, and networking

Class 3

Presentation—Paula Wicklow- March 4

Deadline for securing internship; First short written paper assigned

Writing Assignment #1: Objectives and Substance of Internship

This writing assignment must address the following questions:

- A brief list of the days/hours you worked and the major tasks you worked on.

- What do you hope to gain from the internship--what kinds of knowledge, skills, work experience, contacts, career and personal development?
- How will you go about demonstrating ability to exercise initiative and going beyond what is expected?
- What broader issues do you hope to explore? What courses have you had or are you taking that will be particularly relevant to your internship experience? What questions about the relationship of theory to practice do you hope to explore? Give some specific examples of courses you have taken that may be relevant to your internship and of general issues and/or questions that you would like to be able to explore during the internship.

Class 4- March 18

First short paper due, a roundtable discussion to monitor internship progress, students began discussions of their first short papers

Class 5- April 1

Roundtable discussion, second short paper assigned

Writing Assignment #2: Agency description

This writing assignment is an extremely important opportunity for you to make sure that you are getting "the big picture" with regard to your work. It will require some research: use of agency documents and perhaps interviews with your supervisor and others in the organization. Be sure to explain why you need the information. The bottom line is to come to some conclusion about the effectiveness of your organization in addressing the issues you are concerned about? For example, if you are interested in affordable housing, working at a planning department, and are interested in the effectiveness of city planning as a way of helping to increase affordable housing, does city planning seem to offer an effective tool for this purpose? Why or why not?)

Your paper should include the following components:

- Origins, brief history of the agency;
- Overall goals, organizational mission;
- Main types of activities and how they contribute to the overall goals and mission;
- Major accomplishments; contribution to the larger community;
- A description of "capacity" (i.e., the resources—budget, staff, technology, and qualifications) that is required for organizations to work effectively and efficiently and to achieve their missions;
- Organization chart; your position within it; and
- Political factors (e.g., power relationships with groups and individuals--be they elected officials, community residents/organizations, funders, etc. who represent allies and opponents) that influence the operation of your organization. These factors also include level of resources, e.g., money, knowledge, and activism, which defines power and political influence.

Class 6- April 15

Second short paper due; roundtable discussion, students discuss the second short paper; discuss final assignments

Writing Assignment #4: Final assessments

The final assignments have three separate parts.

- 1) **Overall placement assessment.** Describe the kind of what work you did. In addition, this is the opportunity for your final assessment of the internship experience and the organization that provide this opportunity. The assessment should include responses to the following. What was the most important thing that you learned during your internship? What did you learn about the effectiveness of your organization in addressing the issues you are concerned about? Please include a brief but relatively specific description of the kind of qualifications an intern should have, the kinds of difficulties an intern might anticipate at this placement, and the major benefits of this internship.
- 2) **Overall curriculum assessment.** What courses have been most helpful to you in this internship? What changes would you suggest in the courses you have taken and/or in the overall curriculum of your major?
- 3) **Self-assessment and debriefing.** How would you evaluate your own effort as an intern? How have gone beyond the “call of duty” to demonstrate initiative and with what impact? How has the internship influenced your plans—career or graduate school intentions? What would you do differently next time?

Final Oral Presentations

Media: Power Point Software

Time Limit: 15 minutes

Class 7: Final oral presentation **May 6**

Class 8: Final oral presentation **May 20**

GRADES

Grades reflect two things:

- 1) the quality of your work
- 2) the quality of your learning about your work

Your performance will be based on my assessment, which is based on:

- *writing assignments and oral presentations*: addressing the topics enumerated in the syllabus, thoughtfully, and as thoroughly as possible within the space and time limits;
- *seminar*: regular participation, demonstrating genuine interest in other interns and helping to raise broader issues for analysis.

Summary of assignments and numerical scale for my assessment:

Short Writing Assignments: 2 Assignments, 30 points total

#1	15 points	Objectives and Substance of Internship
#2	15 points	Agency description

Seminar attendance and participation: 30 points total

Scores are based on not only being present but also contributing to discussion and raising questions. Absenteeism can greatly affect this portion your final grade.

Final Presentations: 2 Assignments, 40 points total

Oral Presentation 20 points

Written Presentation 20 points