

## How to Earn Academic Credit for Internships BA Political Science

Catalog description: **POLS 410. Internship.**

**1-12 Credits:** Hands-on experience working with public agencies, political campaigns, elected officials & non-profits. May be repeated for a maximum of 12 credits; only 3 credits apply toward government major or minor requirements. Consent of instructor required.

Graded: S/U.

**Prerequisite(s):** Completion of 12 government credits, 2.5 GPA, junior and above standing.

The Department of Political Science, Public Law and Administration strongly encourages students to gain practical experience outside of the classroom. Participation in the day-to-day work of government agencies, law courts, the offices of elected officials or the programs of non-profit organizations, can provide valuable insight into politics, public law and administration. This kind of experiential learning can complement your coursework and help you build a stronger resume.

Up to 3 credits of POLS 410 Internship can count for your BA Political Science degree or any of our undergraduate minors. You can take up to 12 credits of POLS 410 Internship as part of the 120 credits that are required for graduation, but only 3 of these credits will count for your major. Most students take POLS 410 for 3 credits. In a regular 15-week semester, this translates as 10 hours per week as an intern with an organization or agency, for a total of 150 hours of work. In a 10-week summer session, the number of hours per week is 15 hours, which also adds up to 150 hours of work.

Students seeking academic credit for internship work cannot register for POLS 410 by themselves. They must first speak with a faculty member in the Department of Political Science, Public Law and Administration about their intention and gain approval to be registered, by the department head, for a section of POLS 410. Students should leave **at least three weeks** before the start of their intended internship work to carry out the following steps:

1. Speak with a professor in the department about your intentions to carry out an internship and seek academic credit. All of the faculty members in the department are willing and able to serve as your internship adviser even if the course schedule

only has one or two sections listed. Some professors may be more familiar and more suited to particular topics and the content of your chosen internship.

2. Once you have gained the willingness of a faculty member to serve as the instructor of record for your internship, the department head can add a new section of POLS 410 with its own CRN, as well as that instructor's name. The department head will register you for that section.
3. You need to ask the person who will act as your supervisor in the organization, agency, or court to write a one-page memo on official letter head, with the following information:
  - a) Start and end date of the internship (It helps to use the same dates as a regular semester, or the 10-week summer session)
  - b) Location of the internship (office address and contact information)
  - c) Name and contact information of the supervisor.
  - d) Description or bullet list of the main duties that you will be expected to perform (our expectation is that these duties will contribute to your professional development rather than simply providing basic office or clerical support. Examples may include conducting research, data analysis, or other necessary contributions to the team, supervisor, or office.
  - e) Agreement of your supervisor to provide a one-page letter at the end of the internship semester or summer session to the faculty adviser indicating an overall evaluation of your work as an intern. This letter does not have to be too detailed but should assess your reliability, punctuality, willingness to learn, and ability to perform the tasks you were assigned.

The initial memo and the final letter should be signed, dated, and sent via email to your faculty adviser for this internship.

4. Once your faculty adviser has received the initial memo from your internship supervisor, you must meet with your faculty adviser to discuss the assignments for which you will be graded and awarded academic credit. These assignments consist of a weekly log describing and reflecting on the activities that you have performed during each week. You can upload this log to the CANVAS site for your POLS 410 section each Friday afternoon or evening. In addition, you will submit a reflection paper in the final week of your internship, detailing what you learned from the internship experience and how it has helped you develop skills and knowledge of government, politics, law or administration. Your faculty adviser will use the scores from your weekly logs, your reflection paper, and the final letter from your supervisor to decide if you receive an "S" (Satisfactory) or a "U" (Unsatisfactory) grade. POLS 410 is graded S/U.

5. Please note that we do not give academic credit retroactively for internship work that you may have completed without following all of the steps described above.
6. Do not leave the decision to do an internship to the last minute. As you can see, there are various steps that must be taken in order for you to be registered for POLS 410. The reason for this process is to ensure that your internship experience adds to your professional development and that all parties are on the same page with regard to expectations and deadlines.

If you have general questions about POLS 410 Internship, please email the department head, Dr. Neil Harvey, at [nharvey@nmsu.edu](mailto:nharvey@nmsu.edu)