

POLS 3499:
Practicum in Politics

Instructor information

Prof. Bruce Peabody
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Course information

Section: 31
3 credits
Room: New Academic Building 104
Time: Tues., 2:10-4:50 pm
<http://alpha.fdu.edu/~peabody/practicum.html>

Please read this syllabus thoroughly and carefully -- doing so will substantially improve your ability to do well in this course and your opportunities for learning.

OUTLINE OF SYLLABUS

- I. Course Objectives and Overview**
- II. Requirements and Important Dates**
- III. Grading and the Academic Integrity Policy**
- IV. Schedule of Readings and Assignments**
- V. Suggestions for this Course**
- VI. The Practicum Research Paper**
- VII. The Midsemester Report - Sample**
- VIII. The Final Evaluation - Sample**

I. COURSE OBJECTIVES AND OVERVIEW

The Practicum is a three-credit course in either Political Science or Sociology that combines the traditional classroom setting with the practical workplace experience of an internship. Students enrolled in this course serve as interns at local political, legal, or social service organizations and agencies while reading academic literature about the sector within which they are working. The Practicum combines hands-on field experience with regular discussions about student work experiences, as well as scholarly readings and assignments appropriate for each student.

Through this course you will be exposed to possible careers in political science and sociology and you will cultivate your ability to apply academic knowledge. In addition, the Practicum should ease your eventual transition into employment – by developing invaluable professional contacts, interpersonal skills, and on-the-job experience. In class we will have presentations by different professionals who will help you to think about how to get ready for, and thrive in, the workplace, and we will develop tools to help you write a well-structured analytic essay based on your internship experiences. In short, at the end of the semester you should have a better idea of how you might translate your scholarly training into a profession.

II. REQUIREMENTS AND IMPORTANT DATES

A. The Internship

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Students must work eight (8) hours per week for at least thirteen (13) weeks at an internship site selected with your instructor; past experience suggests that many employers prefer students to work in either half-day or full-day blocks of time to satisfy this requirement. Your work schedule and assignments should be designed in consultation with your supervisor.

Your supervisor will complete an end-of-semester evaluation of your performance. This evaluation will be given considerable weight in calculating your final course grade. Among other things, your supervisor will be asked if you have been fulfilling your eight-hour requirement, arriving on time, and behaving professionally. *Failure to meet these obligations will result in a reduced grade, incomplete, or even a failing grade for the semester.* **At your discretion, you may also ask me to provide your supervisor with a mid-semester evaluation.**

Fairleigh Dickinson University considers all its interns to be representatives of the University. Although most of our internships are unpaid, *students must maintain a courteous, professional attitude at all times during the internship.* You should behave as if you are working as a salaried, full-time employee of your agency. You will need to arrive at and maintain a schedule of regular work times. Keep in mind that the success of your internship experience will help determine opportunities for future students. Moreover, a strong internship performance may lead to an enthusiastic and detailed letter of recommendation useful for future employment and graduate school.

While we have had an excellent track record with prior student experiences, it is possible you will run into work-related problems. If you find that you are having persistent difficulties with your work site or supervisor, you should let your instructor know, and, if possible, try to resolve the situation with your employer. If you are experiencing a serious predicament at work, make sure you carefully document the situation with names, dates, and times, and speak with me immediately.

B. Class Participation

Students must attend scheduled class meetings and participate in our discussions at these meetings. In order for this class to be fully successful, *everyone must regularly participate through active, informed, and respectful discussions.*

C. Readings

During the semester, students will be required to read academic work about the field within which they are working. Since students will be placed in a diverse array of internships, there is no single reading list for the course. Instead, the instructor will provide general readings for the class as a whole, while giving additional, individually tailored assignments. Readings will either be (1) available through the web; or (2) distributed in class.

D. Assignments

In addition to class participation and reading, the course has five more formal assignments. You are advised to note and keep track of the “assigned” and “due” dates for each of these assignments, and write them in your datebook or some other organizer you regularly consult:

1. *resume and cover letter*: each student needs to prepare a resume and cover letter and must submit them to the instructor by Feb. 12th. Your cover letter should be brief and to the point, introducing yourself and explaining your interest in the internship site. Your resume should include the following: some personal information (address, phone number, email, etc.), a list of relevant courses that might pertain to the internships, and a list of previous job experience. This assignment will be graded on a Pass/Fail basis and will be included in your class participation grade. Your instructor will provide you with examples and instructions to help you with this assignment.
 - **due: Feb. 12th**

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2. *mid-semester report*: students will hand in a progress report (provided by the instructor) halfway through the semester. This report will provide a chance to summarize significant learning that has taken place in your work setting. In addition to giving your instructor a more detailed sense of what you have been doing, the report will enable you to reflect on what you have learned, and assess what is going well or poorly. The mid-semester report will be graded Pass/Fail and will be included in your class participation grade;
 - **due: Mar. 26th**

3. *research paper*: this substantial (10-15 pages, double-spaced) paper will apply academic materials (to be decided upon with your instructor) to your internship experience. Students will be expected to draw upon their internship, assigned readings, and discussions in class. Students are required to submit a brief discussion or outline of their proposed paper in advance and participate in either the Political Science or Sociology workshop. The final paper is due in class on May 7th. **No emailed papers will be accepted; late papers will be penalized 1/3 of a grade for each day they are late;**
 - **topic due: March 26th (in class)**
 - **final paper due: May 7th (in class)**

4. *research paper workshop*: political scientists and sociologists will meet as separate groups to discuss your Practicum research papers; each student will speak for 10-15 minutes about their proposed project, setting out their argument, providing an outline for their paper, and discussing some of the materials they hope to use. The workshop is a collaborative endeavor intended to help you with your research;
 - **Political Science workshop: April 9th**
 - **Sociology workshop April 16th**

5. *research paper presentation*: during our final class, students will present their research findings to the class and their instructor for 10-15 minutes; this presentation will serve as a capstone to the semester, providing an opportunity to reflect on what you have learned; your research paper presentation will be incorporated into your class participation grade;
 - **Presentations: May 7th**

6. *work portfolio*: this is a small package of materials designed to teach your professor and future students about your internship experience. Your portfolio should include
 - a) An "Internship in Review" essay (1-2 pages) summarizing the work you have done and reflecting on what you have learned. You should use this essay as an opportunity to think about what lessons you might impart to others entering your internship, and what lessons you would want to keep in mind for your own future work experience. Among other questions you should consider: What prior expectations have been changed by your internship? What substantive knowledge did you learn? What aspects of your work have challenged, refined, or supported what you have learned in class? What would you do differently if you had the opportunity to do the internship over again?
 - b) Any supplementary work that demonstrates points made in your essay and shows what you have been doing over the course of the semester. This might include work, writing, or programs you have helped produce over the course of the semester such as office memos or letters, a brochure you put together, or the agenda of a meeting you helped organize.
 - c) A typewritten record (or work log) of every time you worked at your internship site, the hours you worked, and a brief description of what you did
 - **portfolio due: May 7th**

Additional information about these assignments will be provided through the course of the semester.

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All of your written assignments must be given to me in class on the day they are due; **no emailed work will be accepted.**

Late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a grade for every day they are late; if you are unable to hand in an assignment on time because of an illness or emergency, you must provide me with a note from the Dean of Students. Assignments that are poorly written or filled with grammatical and/or spelling errors will be returned with or without comments; a student will then have 24 hours to return the paper with corrections to the professor. After this period, or if a second paper is returned by the instructor, the paper will be treated as late.

III. GRADING, ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY, AND PLAGIARISM

A. Grades

Your grade for this course will be based on:

- Supervisor's internship evaluations (50%)
- Class participation, including your workshop (15%)
- Work portfolio (5%)
- Research paper (30%)

For the purposes of this course, your final grade will be determined as follows:

97-100	A+
93-96	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
60-69	D
Below 60	F

In determining your final grade, your instructor will also take into account improvement over the course of the semester, how much knowledge you come out of the course with, and your class participation.

All students enrolled at Fairleigh Dickinson University are required to abide by the University's Academic Integrity Policy. According to the Policy, students are expected "to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty . . . [and] have the responsibility to each other to make known the existence of academic dishonesty to their course instructor and then, if necessary, the department chair or the academic dean of their College." Academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) cheating, plagiarism, falsification, and multiple submission of academic work. A full discussion of the Academic Integrity Policy is in the Student Handbook; please review this discussion.

Plagiarism is a particularly serious academic offense. According to the Academic Integrity Policy plagiarism is "[r]epresenting the ideas or language of others as one's own." You must provide a citation every time you use someone else's language or borrow their distinctive ideas (for this course, you may simply use the author's name and page number -- e.g., Peabody, 3). **If you are found guilty of plagiarism in this class you will receive a failing grade for the appropriate academic exercise and a letter discussing the episode will be sent to your Chair, Dean, and to Enrollment Services. A second case of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course and possibly other sanctions.** It is fully expected that you will use the work of others in this class, but you must indicate when you do so. If you have any questions about the Academic Integrity Policy or plagiarism please see me immediately.

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IV. SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

What follows is a list of class topics and your assignments; I have provided reminders for important dates such as when assignments are due.

Use **this schedule to coordinate and plan your assignments and responsibilities in this and your other classes**. If you discover that you have multiple papers due on the same date or week, try to work something out with your instructor (well in advance of the due date) or get one of your assignments done early.

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SOCI 3499 (section 31)
PRACTICUM IN POLITICAL SCIENCE
PRACTICUM IN SOCIOLOGY
Schedule of Assignments and Meetings

- Jan. 29** **Syllabus**
Please review the syllabus and go over the organization of the class and its requirements. Also, please email your instructor at bgpeabody@msn.com so that he can send you information about the course.
- Feb. 5** **Introduction, Resume Writing, The Internship Search**
ASSIGNMENTS:
- Ellin, “The Humble Resume Enters Cyberspace” (handout)
 - Yate, Knock ‘Em Dead 2001, 280-299 (handout)
 - check <http://alpha.fdu.edu/~peabody/practicum.html> for the rest of your assignment
- Feb. 12** **Obtaining and Retaining Your Position: The Employer’s Perspective**
Mary McGrew, the Manager, University Relations for Honeywell, will lead a presentation on obtaining and retaining internships from the employer’s perspective. We will discuss travel arrangements on Feb. 5.
ASSIGNMENTS:
- *Resume and cover letter due* (in class)
- NOTE:** This class will meet at the Learning Center at Honeywell (101 Columbia Road; 973-455-2000). Go to the Security Office and let the officer know you are coming from Fairleigh Dickinson for a meeting with Mary McGrew.
- Feb. 19** **Oct. 11 Presentation by Mr. Corrado Gigante**, Area Director Equal Employment Opportunity Commission on “Rights in the Workplace and their Enforcement”
NOTE: *mid-semester report assigned*
- Feb. 26** **Check-in/The Interview Process**
NOTE: *all Practicum students must have an internship and a work schedule established by this date; failure to do so will result in the Practicum being converted into an Independent Study with the instructor (requiring students to write a 20-25 page research paper)*
ASSIGNMENTS:
- Kirby, “Finessing Interviews: Don’t Ask, Do Tell” (handout)
 - “There Are Questions You Shouldn’t Answer” (handout)
- Mar. 12** **Check-in/Thinking About the Research Paper**
ASSIGNMENTS:
- check <http://alpha.fdu.edu/~peabody/practicum.html> for your assignment
 - Zinsser, “The Interview,” 82-95 (handout)

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Mar. 18 – 22 Spring Break

Mar. 26 Check-in/The Analytic Research Paper

A Writing Tutor from FDU's Academic Support Center will guide you through the process of thinking about, composing, and editing your Practicum research paper.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- *mid-semester report due*
- *research paper topic due (in class)*

Apr. 9 Workshop for Political Science students

Apr. 16 Workshop for Sociology students

May 7 Student Presentations; last day of class

NOTE: research paper due; Work Portfolio due

V. SUGGESTIONS FOR THIS COURSE

Obviously, to do well in this course, you will need to succeed at your internship. Allow yourself some time to settle in to your position, but don't hesitate to talk with your supervisor or your instructor if you believe that things aren't going well, if you don't believe you are getting much out of your experience. In the past, students who have been unfulfilled in their internships have been assigned to new projects, new supervisors, and even moved to entirely different internships.

As soon as you begin your internship work, you should start thinking about possible topics for your paper. Try to pick an idea that will sustain you through the research and writing required for a substantial project. Are there things about your work that surprise or alarm you? Are there consistent difficulties or problems you or your co-workers contend with? These questions may point you to promising avenues for further research.

When writing your final Practicum research paper, you should spend a significant amount of time analyzing the assignment you and your instructor have agreed upon, thinking through the most effective way to approach this assignment (what are the most important questions that need to be answered? What readings/class discussions shed light on this question?). You should then construct a detailed outline setting out your argument and the logical, sequential stages through which you will make this argument. You can then write your paper by simply fleshing out the individual parts of your outline and making sure you have smooth transitions from point to point, paragraph to paragraph.

Make sure you finish a draft of your paper at least 24 hours before it is due. Set it aside for a few hours and then proofread it for errors, logical inconsistencies, and points that need elaboration. If you have a reliable friend or family member, have them help you with your editing (so long as the final work remains yours alone). Set up an appointment with the Academic Support Center (973-443-8538) at any stage of the writing process from the roughest of outlines to (what you think is) a polished draft.

Here are some additional tips:

- always keep a hard and disk copy of your written assignments;
- make sure all your written work is free of spelling and grammatical errors;
- if you are worried that you may have plagiarized/not cited something correctly, check with your instructor; you are well-advised to err on the side of caution on this topic;
- if you can't meet me during office hours, please schedule an alternate time;

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- for websites and links that may be of use in this course, check:
<http://alpha.fdu.edu/~peabody/practicum.html>
- if you are having problems with the readings, assignments, or a classmate, see me immediately – do not wait until the assignment is due or your classmate causes you grief.

VI. THE PRACTICUM RESEARCH PAPER

You must complete a 10-15 page (double-spaced, normal fonts and margins) research paper for this course. Your paper must 1) be related to scholarship in your major area and 2) draw on some aspect of your internship experience. Within these basic parameters, you have a great deal of discretion, although you will be guided by your Practicum instructor and faculty experts on your topic.

What kinds of research approaches are suitable for this paper? In your research paper you might:

- Test, apply, or compare theories or arguments presented in an earlier sociology or political science course (e.g., you might look at and try to explain gender relations in the workplace using feminist theory; or you might examine under what conditions Herbert Packer’s “crime control” or “due process” model seems more descriptive of our justice system)
- Offer an argument of your own to explain or help us understand some problem, set of relationships, or phenomenon (e.g., if you are working for a local politician, you might look at that person’s daily schedule and offer an explanation for how they prioritize their activities)
- Place a problem, set of relationships, or phenomenon in a historical, political, sociological, or comparative context to help us understand its significance and importance (e.g., you might discuss how evolving local law enforcement techniques reflect an increasing awareness of the globalization of crime)

How can you use your internship to write your research paper? Your workplace experience can:

- Provide evidence for the theory you are testing or applying, the proposition you are considering (e.g., if you want to see, along the lines of David Mayhew, if federal legislators are single-mindedly preoccupied with reelection, you might examine how many of a congressman’s activities seem related to this goal)
- Point you to a problem or puzzle that you would like to explore and understand better (e.g., perhaps your work at the local prosecutor’s office surprises you by suggesting that the relationship between the prosecution and defense teams in criminal cases are not always strictly adversarial)
- Give you a contact with an expert in an area you wish to explore further, even if this area is not directly related to your internship duties

How should I structure the research paper? There are obviously any number of ways to set up your paper depending upon what questions you want to analyze and what materials you use. The following outline can be adapted for many papers, however:

1. **Introduction** – briefly set out your argument/thesis and how you will make it, viz., what points you will make, what kinds of evidence you will use
2. **Background** – provide the necessary background on your issue, topic, or problem including relevant scholarly literature
3. **The Argument Developed** – Set out and elaborate upon your specific argument and analysis, explaining how your take helps your reader better understand or grasp the problem or question you set out in your introduction
4. **Examples/Evidence** – provide specific examples, evidence, arguments to support your thesis
5. **The Other side** – your paper will be strengthened and made more nuanced if you consider its potential weaknesses or counter-evidence; if possible, you should try to refute these points or at least show why they aren’t vital to your analysis

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6. **Conclusion and Bibliography**– your conclusion should summarize your main point, remind your reader what he or she has learned by reading your paper, point to the significance/implications of your work and perhaps gesture to problems with your Implications, further research

Due dates. In order to keep you on top of this paper, I will be checking in with you regularly and setting a number of deadlines for preliminary assignments related to your research.

The workshop: You will meet on two dates to discuss your research papers. During these sessions, each student will speak for 5-10 minutes about their proposed project, setting out their argument, providing an outline for their paper, and discussing some of the materials they hope to use. The workshop is a collaborative endeavor intended to help you with your research, and, therefore, after your presentation we will open the floor for discussions, questions, and clarifications. On your workshop date, you should bring copies of a short outline of your paper for everyone attending.

The Practicum research paper represents a significant amount of the work you are expected to do for this class. Therefore, it must be taken seriously, written and edited carefully, and handed in on time.

Other Suggestions:

- *Address the issue/answer the question:* Address whatever issue you pose and answer whatever question(s) you ask yourself. Make sure that your paper and the evidence/material it considers actually is related to your overall argument!
- *Writing Style and Technique:* Avoid sweeping statements that fail to advance or distinguish your argument (and that may, additionally, be false or at least raise questions you are not prepared to answer).

Example(s): "No single writer on sociological issues has had as much influence as Max Weber."

- *Precision:* Choose words with care; know the meaning of every word you use (get in the habit of testing your instinct about what a word means against a good dictionary); avoid colloquialisms and clichés. Your prose should be clear, accurate, and flowing; eliminate redundant, gratuitous, or vague words. Avoid allusions that have no clear referent: if something is important, identify it; if something is trivial, do not mention it.

Example(s): Avoid phrases such as "final conclusion," "time period," "extremely unique," "continue to persist."

Editing and Economy: Nothing more readily transforms ordinary or even poor writing into strong writing than energetic, repeated editing. This will help to polish your prose, clarify and tighten your arguments, and reduce verbiage. Some suggestions: (1) read your work aloud -- if you do this carefully and slowly you will spot obvious errors and awkward phrasing. If possible have a friend (unfamiliar with the course) read your paper for structure, style, and clarity; (2) continually ask yourself what you meant to say and whether you have actually said it (this should be done at every structural level of the paper: sentences, paragraphs, pages, and at the level of the entire work); (3) maintain a skeptical inner voice that questions and challenges the points that your essay makes; (4) do not hesitate to cut, even (especially) interesting arguments or particularly vivid turns of phrase that do nothing to advance your argument.

VII. The Practicum Midsemester Evaluation - SAMPLE

PART I (for those of you who have completed your internship you may skip to PART II below)

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A. How is your internship going? Are you having any problems or difficulties with scheduling, co-workers, your supervisor? Meeting your hour requirements?

B. When do you expect to complete your internship?

C. Please provide the contact information for your supervisor.

PART II (your paper):

A. Are you aware of the requirements for your Practicum paper (please review your syllabus before responding)?

B. What are you thinking about writing on for your paper?

C. If you are having trouble thinking about this assignment, please let me know how I can help (generating a topic? Thinking about what to read, etc.)

PART III

Is there anything else I should know? Any other questions you have?

VIII. THE PRACTICUM FINAL EVALUATION - SAMPLE

Please return by email, regular mail, or fax to:

Prof. Bruce Peabody
Department of Social Sciences and History
Fairleigh Dickinson University, 285 Madison Avenue
Madison, New Jersey 07940

Phone: (973) 443-8729
Fax: (973) 443-8799
Email: bpeabody@fd.edu

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Practicum in Politics & Sociology
SUPERVISOR'S FINAL EVALUATION

Name of student intern: _____ Date: _____

Name of organization/internship site: _____

Name and position of supervisor: _____

Approximate number of hours student has worked to date _____

Approximate number of hours student worked/week _____

Please rank the intern in the following categories:

	Unacceptable (F)	Below Average (D)	Average (C)	Very Good (B)	Excellent (A)
Ability to accept criticism					
Ability to communicate					
Ability to learn					
Attendance					
Attitude					
Cooperation with others					
<i>Dependability</i>					
Initiative					
Judgment					
Quality of work					

What grade would you suggest in assessing the intern's overall performance? If possible please provide a numerical ranking using the following scale:

Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Failing
97-100 A+	87-89 B+	77-79 C+	60-69 D	Below 60 F
93-96 A	83-86 B	73-76 C		
90-92 A-	80-82 B-	70-72 C-		

Final Grade

I. Please describe the project(s) performed by the intern:

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II. Was the intern's project or work of immediate, long-term, general or of no benefit to your organization?

III. In what way(s) did the intern and your organization benefit from this experience?

IV. Please indicate any particular strengths and/or weaknesses you feel that this intern possesses:

V. What sort(s) of supervision did you provide for the intern? How often did you meet with your intern? Was this what you had anticipated? Please explain.

VI. Did the intern seem to have accurate expectations of your organization and the work he/she could do? Please explain.

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VII. Did the means by which we placed this intern with you work satisfactorily or might there be a better method?

VIII. Would you be willing to accept an intern from FDU in the future?

IX. Additional comments, suggestions, or observations about this intern or those you might wish in the future:

Supervisor's signature: _____

Unless you indicate otherwise, this evaluation will be kept confidential. If you do not mind sharing this evaluation with the student, please initial below:

____ You may share this evaluation with the student.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Please complete this form and send or fax to: Bruce Peabody, Assistant Professor Political Science, Department of Social Sciences and History, Fairleigh Dickinson University, 285 Madison Avenue, Madison, New Jersey 07940, fax: 973/443-8799 email: bpeabody@fdu.edu
