PSC 395 and 795
Political Science Internships

- Begin by identifying the type of organization where you would like to work. The department does not provide a generic internship experience. Rather, we attempt to cultivate placements that are custom designed to each student’s long-term career interests.

  For example, students with a public administration concentration often work with local governments and city managers – although others have worked for community organizations and specialized non-profits. Meanwhile, those who aspire to attend law school typically choose to work with law firms or in a judge’s office. Those interested in lobbying typically get their start as a staffer in a state legislative office, while others choose to work on electoral campaigns or with a state political party. Think about the type of experience that will enable you to “try on” a potential career. In addition, think about the type of experience that will help you to cultivate a professional network.

  Have no doubt that the types of experiences you pursue can affect your opportunities after graduation. Students have transitioned from an internship into paid employment in the past. One student used her past internship experience with an organization called Vote Smart to successfully apply for White House internship with the Obama administration. In short, the decisions you make now can pay off in the near future.

- Once you have some ideas in mind, please feel free to consult the internship director, Dr. Sharon Kukla-Acevedo, who will help you identify the best choices for your career interests.

- After identifying a potential organization and discussing the choice with Dr. Kukla-Acevedo, we recommend that you make the initial contact with the organization yourself. Simply call, indicate that you are a CMU student interested in an internship, and ask to whom you should speak. Make sure to do some research about the organization or legislator. If you can explain why the organization serves your career interests, or why you would like to work for a particular legislator because of her long-term policy interests or committee work, you will be more likely to impress your new supervisor. Students are rarely rejected. Most political science internships are unpaid, and most organizations are eager to find good help. If, however, you need more assistance making initial contacts, Dr. Kukla-Acevedo will be happy to help you.

- You will also need to arrange the types of tasks and the number of hours that you will be working during your internship. Undergraduates must work a total of 40 hours per credit hour, while graduate students must work a total of 100 hours per credit hour.

  Graduate students typically need to complete a 3 credit (300 hour) internship. Undergraduate public administration majors also need to complete a 3 credit (120 hour) internship for graduation. Undergraduates with other concentrations, however, need to keep in mind that internship credits cannot be used to replace a regular political science elective. Internship credits do count toward the university’s 300-level credit requirements. Students can register from 1 credit (40 hours of work) to 12 credits (480 hours of work). The best way to determine how many credits you should enroll in is to consult your graduation audit.

  You can complete these hours in any way that best suites you and your supervisor’s needs. In addition, if you need additional time, beyond the end of a normal semester deadline, to complete the work, I will simply give you an incomplete until your hours are completed.

- In order to register for the class, your supervisor must confirm the number of hours and types of tasks assigned in a letter or an e-mail to Dr. Kukla-Acevedo at kuklalsa@cmich.edu. Typically, an e-mail is the easiest way to fulfill this requirement. Upon her receipt of this confirmation, you will need to stop by Dr. Kukla-Acevedo’s office hours (which vary by semester) or schedule an appointment. She will have you complete the required forms, and she will help you obtain a “bump” card. You will need to take the signed card to the Registrar’s Office, where you can add the course.

- Upon registering, the course should show up on your list of classes and on your blackboard site. You will be charged for the class according to the rates you pay per credit.

- Dr. Kukla-Acevedo requires bi-weekly e-mail reports on the nature of your experiences during the internship. Other academic requirements include a reflective paper at the end of the semester, as well as a letter or e-mail of evaluation from your supervisor. Further information about submitting these assignments will be provided when you register for the class.