
POLITICAL SCIENCE INTERNSHIP AT VIRGINIA TECH



WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

An internship is an opportunity to receive academic credit for working in a governmental or political setting. Credit is not given for the work alone, but for the learning a student can demonstrate as a result of the experience. While interns normally receive little or no pay, credit can be arranged for either paid or unpaid internships. Internships can be located in any setting that provides an opportunity to observe some aspect of the political process. Among the most common are the U.S. Congress, state legislatures, political campaigns, international organizations, and national, state, or local administrative agencies. Under some limited circumstances, internships can also be arranged with lobbying organizations and with judges or law offices.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE

1. To be eligible, students must have an overall GPA of **2.5** or better. Exceptions may be made if a student's Political Science GPA is very strong.
2. As a rule, internships are limited to Juniors and Seniors. Exceptions may be made for others with substantial coursework in Political Science.
3. We generally require students to have completed enough courses relevant to the internship to be able to fully benefit from the experience, but that judgment is made on a case-by-case basis.
4. While most interns receiving Political Science credit are Political Science majors or minors, credit can be arranged for majors in other fields, as well.

HOW AN INTERNSHIP IS ARRANGED

1. Internships must be arranged in advance. Registration cannot be done retroactively. Normally, a student should contact the Department's Internship Adviser in the semester prior to the anticipated internship. For summer internships, it is a good idea for the student to contact the Adviser in the early spring.
2. Students should meet with the Internship Coordinator to discuss receiving credit for the internship.
3. In most cases, students are expected to arrange their own internships. The Internship Adviser may be able to suggest possible contacts and identify programs to which a student might apply.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THE INTERN?

Interns are expected to be responsible in performing their jobs. Interns must work for the arranged time, every workday, at the tasks they are assigned as if they were regular employees. We will want a letter from the intern's supervisor confirming their job performance at the end of the internship. Equally important, an intern is expected to make use of the opportunity to learn. This basically means doing two things:

First, the intern should do background reading on the institution or political process involved in the internship. An intern in the U.S. Senate, for instance, may be asked to read material on the Senate as an institution. This will be in addition to the background a student may have acquired through coursework.

Second, the intern must be an observer and analyst, as well as a participant. This means consciously seeking and noting the similarities and differences between what one has read and what one is experiencing or observing. In effect, it means trying to figure out how the system works, not just how to survive in one small part of it. It also entails making judgments about that system.

The record of doing these two things will be in the intern's **daily journal** and a 3-to-5 page **summary paper** in which the intern reflects on what he or she gained from the internship experience.

COURSE CREDIT

Interns may in most cases register for two types of credit. First, there is credit for the internship experience. Registration for this is done through **Political Science 4754, Internship Program**. For full-time, semester-long internships, students generally receive six hours of credit, though other numbers of hours may be arranged in special cases. Part-time or shorter-term internships usually carry less academic credit.

Second, credit can be given for research performed in addition to an internship. To receive this credit, interns must engage a faculty member in supervising a substantial research paper during the period of their internship. This may deal with a policy or legal issue on which the intern has worked, or may be an analysis of the politics and processes involved in an issue or institution. Research topics must be approved by the student's faculty adviser in advance of the independent study, but may be subject to modification once the semester has begun. Registration for this credit is through **Political Science 4974, Independent Study** and **MUST** be done in the semester prior to the internship. You cannot register for this course online. There is additional paper work that you must complete before this can be added to your schedule. It is possible to earn as many as six credit hours for this research.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED

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