

POLS 380: Internship in Politics and Government

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Course Description and Objective

The Internship Program is an opportunity for Political Science and International Relations majors to learn through practical experience. While internships are invaluable as a means of professional networking and career advancement, *the primary objective of our program is for students to make connections between the discipline of political science and their own vocational calling.*

Student-interns work in a variety of national, state, and local executive and legislative offices, governmental and non-governmental agencies, political campaigns, party and interest group organizations, think tanks, advocacy groups, and law-related organizations (e.g., courts, law firms). International Relations students may also consider internships in international business or non-government organizations (NGOs). Internships may take place anywhere and throughout the calendar year.

This syllabus addresses the most frequently asked questions about the program. Please read it carefully before meeting with the Internship Director to discuss internship opportunities.

How many internship credits may students earn?

Students in the Political Science major may apply 2-6 internship credits to satisfy elective requirements within the major. Students with the Civic Leadership and Policy Studies concentration are required to complete at least three internship credits. *The maximum number of internship credits in the Political Science major is six.*

Students in the International Relations major may apply 2-3 internship credits to satisfy elective requirements within the major. *The maximum number of internship credits in the International Relations major is three.*

Calvin University will apply up to 12 internship credits toward the 124-credit graduation requirement, including credits completed as part of the Political Science majors and International Realations majors.

How many hours are students required to work? Over what duration?

The Department of Political Science grants academic credit in proportion to the hours of work a student-intern completes. For each credit, the student is expected to work forty hours in the internship itself (e.g. the student must work a total of 120 hours to receive three credits and 240 hours to receive six credits) and complete several academic and professional assignments. A typical work schedule during the fall or spring semesters is 8.5 hours a week for 14 weeks to obtain three credits and 17 hours a week for 14 weeks to obtain six credits. (Students may choose 2, 4, or 5 credits as well.)

Under normal circumstances, internships must be at least six weeks in duration.

What are the prerequisites for the program?

Sophomore, junior, or senior status; appropriate course background in Political Science, International Relations, or related fields; and permission of the Internship Director.

How do students find an internship?

While the Internship Director and Department of Political Science will help prospective interns find a suitable organization, students themselves are ultimately responsible for identifying and contacting a sponsoring organization.

One of the key steps in finding an internship is to meet with the Internship Director to discuss vocational aspirations and placement opportunities. Prior to this meeting, students should write a brief sketch of their ideal internship placement as well as consult the following resources:

- The Political Science Internships website (<https://calvin.edu/academics/departments-programs/political-science/student-experience/internships/>)
- Calvin's Career Center (<https://calvin.edu/offices-services/career-center/jobs-and-internships/internships-for-credit.html>)
- The weekly POLS/IR Majors/Minors email blast, which often includes opportunities.
- The Calvin Political Science Facebook site, which advertises opportunities within our network.

What are the expectations of interns?

The intern is to perform as if they were a regular employee of the office. They should be professional, punctual, productive, and open to feedback and supervision. Although the primary job responsibility is to work on assigned projects, the intern may also be expected to do routine tasks and clerical work. Because the internship is taken for academic credit, interns must also think more broadly about their role in terms of personal calling and the discipline of political science. See below for specific evaluation expectations.

What are the expectations of internship providers?

Internship providers are expected to provide interns with meaningful tasks, ideally a project or series of projects, and regular supervision in the accomplishment of those tasks. Internship providers should specify a supervisor for the intern. Before the student begins an internship with the sponsoring organization, the student will fill out and sign the Internship Agreement (appended). In addition, the internship supervisor's responsibilities are to be in regular, direct contact with the intern and complete a final evaluation of the intern.

May I get internship credit for summer work?

Students are encouraged to take advantage of summers as an opportunity to complete an internship. The same expectations as any internship apply to summer internships. Before completing a summer internship, please consult with the Internship Director about whether to register for summer or regular-semester credit.

How does Calvin's Henry Semester in Washington, D.C., work with POLS 380?

Students can apply credits from the DC Semester to the political science or international relations major. The credit maximums (6 for Political Science majors, 3 for International Relations majors) apply. Please be certain to notify the Internship Director if you intend to apply DC credits to the major.

How is the student's internship evaluated?

Students receiving credit for an internship must complete the following assignments. Please note that there are multiple deadlines.

Before and during the internship, students must complete the following:

- 1.) *Internship Agreement*: This form (appended) identifies the internship location and internship supervisor as well as outlines the responsibilities of the student-intern. Under normal circumstances, this form must be submitted to the Internship Director before the student begins his/her internship.
- 2.) *Learning Goals*: Within two weeks of the start of the internship, students will submit to the Internship Director a brief summary (no more than two pages, double spaced) of their learning goals. Students must also keep a copy of these goals for their own reflections at the conclusion of the internship. Interns should focus on the following areas:
 - a. *Professional Development*: How do you expect this internship to help you pursue your career goals?
 - b. *Scholarly*: How do you expect your internship to confirm/disconfirm what you have learned as a student of political science or international relations?
 - c. *Civic*: What political knowledge or civic skills (e.g. public speaking, writing, research, analysis, financial literacy, cultural competency, leadership) do you hope to obtain through this internship?
 - d. *Personal*: How do you expect the internship to impact your sense of vocational calling? How does Christian conviction bear on your internship work, if at all?
- 3.) *Weekly Journal*: For each week of work, students will submit a brief journal entry to the Internship Director. These entries will describe the internship activities for that week and student reflections on these activities and their connection to the learning goals of the internship.

Around the end of the internship, students will complete the following (note: “end of the internship” is the end date listed on the Internship Agreement):

- 4.) *Supervisor Evaluation*: At least two weeks before the end of the internship, the intern will request that his or her supervisor forward a performance evaluation directly to the Director. The evaluation should indicate whether the student-intern has performed satisfactorily for the appropriate number of hours. A brief letter or email is usually sufficient.
- 5.) *Internship Portfolio*, submitted to the Internship Director via email by the end date of the semester, and including the following:
 - a. *Résumé*: Interns will integrate their internship experience into a résumé that also includes their educational information, and other relevant experience.
 - b. *Informational Interviews*: Interns will conduct informational interviews with one (for interns completing 2-3 credits) or two (for interns completing 4-6 credits) established professionals in their area of interest (e.g. legislator, lawyer, legislative director, chief of staff, campaign manager, political advocate, public executive or administrator). The portfolio will include a summary of the interview(s) in no more than 2 double-spaced pages for each interview. The interview(s) may cover a range of topics, including the career motivations of the interviewee(s), his or her education and other experiences that led to his or her position, and the aspects of the profession that he or she likes or dislikes, among other topics. In the summary, be sure to record the interviewee’s name and the date and place of the interview(s).

- c. *Final Reflection Paper:* Interns will write a 4-6 page paper (double-spaced) that reflects on the (1) political and social role of the internship provider, (2) how the internship provider confirms or disconfirms relevance, and (3) the student's experience working for the internship provider. The paper should make explicit linkages to the political science or international relations literature, though the intern may find that his or her experience does not confirm that literature. Students might respond to the follow questions in this reflection:

- Whom is the organization trying to serve, and in what way?
- How does the organization pursue its goal(s)? What are the major obstacles to pursuing its goals (e.g. individual people, public opinion, local institutions, resources, etc.)?
- What does the existing scholarly literature suggest about the organization's structure, function, and/or goals and how does the student's experience align with what the literature suggest?
- What are the organization's standards for effectiveness? Does it live up to those standards? Should there be different standards?
- Did the student meet his or her own learning objectives by working for this provider? Why or why not?