

POL 89A: Political Science Internship

Spring 2024

Every other Tuesday
11:10am-12:30pm
Rabb 335

Professor Zachary Albert
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Office Hours ([by appointment¹](#)):
Mondays 10am-1pm

Course Overview and Objectives:

This course will provide students with an opportunity for experiential learning, career exploration, and professional skill development within the context of political and policymaking organizations. This class will offer students an opportunity to reflect on their past or ongoing internship experience, and guide students through thinking about their next steps. In this course, we will talk about different types of organizations in the political and policymaking world and discuss different pathways into these fields. Each student will conduct several presentations in class, work on their resume and cover letter writing skills, and develop other important professional skills. Students will also hear from Brandeis alumni working in politics and experts on professional development and public speaking.

Within the Politics department, this course is an elective and meets the university's oral communications requirement. As with all courses in the Politics Department, this class requires an average of 12 hours of work each week. However, because of the nature of this course, most of the time that you spend for this class will be working at your internship. Consequently, our class time together and the time you spend completing assignments for this course will be much less than a traditional Politics course.

Prerequisites: There are no formal prerequisites for this course. However, students must either a) have done a relevant internship during the summer or semester before the course or b) be doing an internship contemporaneously.

Importantly, you need to provide me with the name, title and contact information for your internship supervisor so that I can be in touch with that person to confirm that you have met the hours requirement for this course (i.e. ~80 hours).

Learning Goals:

In line with the Politics Department [learning goals](#), we will work together to:

¹ I kindly ask that you sign up at the Calendly website beforehand, if possible.

- 1) Allow students the opportunity to work in a political or policy setting that is of interest to them.
- 2) Enhance students' knowledge of political organizations, job opportunities, and professional development.
- 3) Develop the skills that are relevant to professional life, including resume-building, public speaking, and professional writing skills.

Assignments and Grading:

Much of the work for this course will be experiential and done independently during your internship. However, we will meet every other week in person throughout the semester. We will learn together through discussions, written work, and presentations. You are responsible for completing all the assigned work (readings, assignments, and presentations) for the course, in addition to completing your internship.

The final grade, totaling a possible 100 points, is based on the following assignments:

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|-------------------------------|---------|
| 1) Attendance & Participation | (20pts) |
| 2) Journal & Folder | (8pts) |
| 3) Presentation #1 | (12pts) |
| 4) Short Paper #1 | (12pts) |
| 5) Presentation #2 | (12pts) |
| 6) Short Paper #2 | (12pts) |
| 7) Presentation #3 | (12pts) |
| 8) Short Paper #3 | (12pts) |

Of note, these presentations are informal but will require preparation. These are opportunities to imagine you are speaking to a group in your office; you should be relaxed but prepared. You do not need slides but may want to have an outline of the points that you'd like to make. In order to meet the university's oral communication requirement, we will have instruction on public speaking and you will receive feedback on each presentation, which should help you feel confident in your classroom speaking.

1. Attendance & Participation

Because we meet so infrequently, I ask that you do not miss any class meetings. If there are extenuating circumstances, please speak with me. You should be prepared to participate in each class discussion, including listening attentively to your colleagues, asking questions, and contributing your own thoughts and ideas. *In general, you should treat the class as you would your internship (and future job) – it is important that you show up (on time!) and actively contribute.*

2. Journal & Folder

During each week of your internship, write some notes to yourself in an electronic journal about what you were doing in the office, observations as to what is happening in the organization, and other reflections that will help you work on your assignments for this class. If you have already completed your internship, set aside several writing sessions to jot down reflections on what you did, what you enjoyed or struggled with, what you learned, etc.

These entries can be as short or as long as would be useful to you. You should also keep a folder of any work that you “produce” during your internship. This could be a memo, a draft of a letter, a spreadsheet, or any item that you create during your internship. This will be used to remind yourself of the work that you have done during the internship. Please make sure that you have permission from your supervisor to keep a copy of this work. If there is nothing that you can keep for your own records, please let me know. You will keep this journal and your work products in a Box folder that I create and share with you. You and I will be the only individuals with access to these items.

3. Presentation #1: Internship Overview

Your boss’s boss has asked for an overview of the work you’ve done/will do in your internship. Where are you working? What is your position? What kind of work are you doing? And what do you hope to get out (or did get out) of the experience? *[3-4 minutes; feel free to show work you are especially proud of, if allowed]*

****Note:** these presentations will be spread across two class periods. January 30th will include presentations from students working “in government” (e.g. a state or federal legislature, bureaucratic agency, local government, the executive branch). February 13th will include presentations from students working “outside” government (e.g. think tanks, non-profits, interest groups, campaigns, lobbying firms). ******

4. Short Paper #1: Job Posting/Reflection

You have been asked to write a job posting for the next batch of interns. Develop a 1-page or less job description for your position that includes information about the job and its duties, the organization, the necessary experience, and the skills and opportunities the job offers. Then, using your own voice, write a 1-page reflection about the internship, for example: the skills you brought to the job (and how you developed them), the skills you wish you had prior to the internship (and how you could have learned them), the skills you learned on the job (and how you learned them), the reasons you liked or disliked the experience, and/or how the experience will inform your future.

****Note:** the assignment due dates are staggered. For those working in government, the assignment is due February 6th. For those working outside government, it is due February 20th. ******

5. Presentation #2: The Ideal Job

What is your ideal job post-graduation? What do you think you’d like about it? How, if at all, did your internship inform this decision? What does the career path look like? What skills do you have/will you develop to help you attain this job? *[3-4 minutes; it’s ok if you don’t have an ideal*

job in mind just yet. If that's the case, you can speak more broadly about the types of fields that interest you or work you'd like to do.]

6. *Short Paper #2: Resume Dissection*

In no more than 2 pages, reflect on your resume and the strengths/gaps in it. What makes you a compelling job candidate? What skills and experiences can you develop to improve your marketability? Also, compare your original resume to your edited resume and reflect on the changes you made. Why did you make the changes (in light of what we learned in class and our peer review), and how did the changes improve your resume? Be sure to include both the original and edited resume along with the reflection paper.

7. *Presentation #3: Mock Interview*

With a partner (in a related internship or field), develop 3-4 interview questions and answers for a relevant job position. In the class presentation, one student will take on the role of the interviewer and the other the interviewee. Before starting the interview, give a brief description of the organization/position you'll be "applying for". Be sure to come up with meaningful questions that include both broad topics and more specific questions related to the field/position. The answers should clearly address the question while also allowing the interviewee to highlight their strengths and accomplishments (you will need to reflect on why they were good questions/answers in Short Paper #3). You can draw on your own life/experiences or role play. [5-7 minutes]

8. *Short Paper #3: Mock Interview Reflection*

In no more than 2 pages, reflect on the questions and answers you developed for the mock interview. Why did you ask these particular questions? What candidate attributes or skills did they assess? Why were they good questions for the job? Turning to the answers, what made them strong answers to the questions? In hindsight (and in light of what we learned in class), how could you improve these answers, and why would these changes represent improvements? Mock interview partners can collaborate on this assignment but each student must write their own reflection. Be sure to include a list of the questions and brief notes on the answers with the paper (does not count toward page limit).

Late Policy: I typically do not grant extensions for assignments unless there are extenuating circumstances. However, please speak with me if you do not think you will turn in your work by the deadline, and be sure to turn in all assignments even if they are late (see below).

Requirements to Pass: Students *must* complete all major assignments (presentations, short papers, and journal/folder) in order to pass this course. Failure to complete all assignments will result in an incomplete. Students who miss a presentation date must schedule a makeup presentation with the professor.

Accessibility Accommodations: Brandeis (and I) seek to welcome and include all students. If you are a student who needs accommodations as outlined in an accommodations letter, please talk with me and present your letter of accommodation as soon as you can. I want to support you.

In order to provide test accommodations, I need the letter more than 48 hours in advance. I want to provide your accommodations, but cannot do so retroactively. If you have questions about documenting a disability of requesting accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Support (SAS) at 781.736.3470 or access@brandeis.edu.

Academic Integrity:

Every member of the University community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. Academic dishonest – which includes plagiarism, fabrication, deception, cheating, and sabotage² – will not be tolerated. You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult Brandeis University [Rights and Responsibilities](#) for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work to TurnItIn.com software to verify originality. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university. Citation and research assistance can be found at [LTS - Library guides](#).

Communication Policy:

Course communication should take place during class, via e-mail, or during office hours. I check e-mail regularly during working hours and periodically at other times. I cannot guarantee that I will quickly respond to e-mails sent at night or over the weekend, so please plan ahead if you have questions regarding assignments.

Office Hours: My scheduled office hours are **Mondays 10am-1pm** and **by appointment**. If your schedule permits you to meet during my scheduled hours, please make use of those times rather than schedule an appointment. You should sign up for schedule hours at <https://calendly.com/profalbert/professor-albert-s-office-hours-spring-2024>, where you can select your format preference (via phone, Zoom, or in person) and provide relevant information prior to the meeting. You can also stop by my office without making an appointment, but students with appointments will be prioritized.

Classroom Environment and Expectations:

In addition to coming to each class fully prepared to participate, I ask that you:

- 1) Be respectful and open-minded.
- 2) Come to class ready to listen, engage, and share.
- 3) Show up on time and stay engaged until the end of class (unless you tell me you must leave early).
- 4) Put your cell phone away and turn off the ringer.
- 5) Abstain from computer use when possible. We will sometimes use computers for class activities and students may wish to take notes on them, but oftentimes in this course

² <https://www.berkeleycitycollege.edu/wp/de/what-is-academic-dishonesty/>

(e.g. during others' presentations) they are unnecessary and distracting.

Semester Schedule:

JANUARY 16TH | INTRODUCTION & GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING

In this class we will **introduce ourselves**, learn about the **structure and content of the course**, and explore the topic of **public speaking**.

Class Speaker: NONE

Class Presentation: NONE

Assignment: NONE

Optional Resources:

1. ["Harnessing the Science of Persuasion" \(Cialdini 2001\)](#)
2. ["To Overcome Your Fear of Public Speaking, Stop Thinking About Yourself" \(Gershman 2019\)](#)
3. Review videos on LATTE covering best practices for oral communication

JANUARY 30TH | WORKING IN GOVERNMENT

In this class we will discuss various **career opportunities in government** (e.g. in the legislature, executive, or bureaucracy at the local, state, or federal level). We will hear from a Brandeis alumni who works "in government". During class, **students with an internship "in government"** will take part in **presentation #1 (Internship Overview)**. These same students will turn in **Short Paper #1 (Job Posting/Reflection)** by February 6th.

Class Speaker: TBA

Class Presentation: Presentation #1 (Internship Overview)

Assignment: Short Paper #1 (Job Posting/Reflection) (due February 6th)

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Optional Resources:

1. ["Hill Climbers: A Day in the Life of a House Staffer" \(Johnson 2012\)](#)
2. ["Life in Congress" \(Congressional Management Foundation 2012\)](#)
3. ["Dear White Staffers" \(Sotomayor 2022\)](#)
4. ["What's It Like to Work for the President?" \(McDonald 2015\)](#)
5. ["Dear Bureaucrat, Is a Government Job Worth Getting?" \(Reed 2019\)](#)
6. ["Why Bureaucrats Don't Seem to Care" \(Zacka 2017\)](#)

FEBRUARY 13TH | WORKING OUTSIDE GOVERNMENT

In this class we will discuss various **career opportunities "outside" government** (e.g. at think tanks, non-profits, lobbying firms, on campaigns). We will hear from Brandeis alumni **Justin Sohn**, a McKinsey consultant with experience working in the policy realm. During class, **students with an internship "outside government"** will take part in **presentation #1 (Internship Overview)**. These same students will turn in **Short Paper #1 (Job Posting/Reflection)** by October 11th.

Class Speaker: TBD

Class Presentation: Presentation #1 (Internship Overview)

Assignment: Short Paper #1 (Job Posting/Reflection) (due February 20th)

Optional Resources:

1. ["Working at a \(DC\) Policy Think Tank" \(US Policy Careers 2021\)](#)
2. ["Is a Nonprofit Job Right for You?" \(Sriram 2021\)](#)
3. ["24 Things I Wish I Knew Before Entering the Nonprofit World" \(Ibele 2017\)](#)
4. ["Guide to Working on Political Campaigns" \(Woods\)](#)
5. ["A Day in the Life of a Lobbyist" \(The Princeton Review\)](#)

FEBRUARY 27TH | FINDING & APPLYING FOR JOBS

In this class we will discuss different ways to **find and apply for job opportunities**. We will hear from **a member of the Hiatt Career Center**, who will walk us through the resources Hiatt offers to find and apply for job postings. During class, **students will take part in presentation #2 (The Ideal Job)**.

Class Speaker: TBA (Hiatt Career Center)

Class Presentation: Presentation #2 (The Ideal Job)

Assignment: NONE

Optional Resources:

1. ["How to Get a Job Through LinkedIn" \(Kumar 2022\)](#)
2. ["Handshake" \(Hiatt\)](#)
3. ["Hiatt Career Closet" \(Hiatt\)](#)

MARCH 12TH | RESUME WRITING

In this class we will discuss **resume writing best practices** and participate in **peer review of each others' resumes**. Students should ***bring a draft resume to class***. We will hear from **an expert from the Hiatt Career Center**, who will share their insights on writing a stellar resume and cover letter (3/26). Within one week of this class, students will submit **short paper #2 (Resume Dissection)**.

Class Speaker: TBD (Hiatt Career Center)

Class Presentation: NONE

Assignment: Short Paper #2 (Resume Dissection) (Due March 19th)

Optional Resources:

1. ["Resumes" \(Hiatt\)](#)
2. ["Build Career-Ready Skills" \(Hiatt\)](#)

MARCH 26TH | COVER LETTERS & LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

In this class we will discuss **developing cover letters** and **soliciting letters of recommendation**. We will also participate in **peer review of each others' cover letters**. Students should ***bring a draft cover letter to class***.

Class Speaker: NONE

Class Presentation: NONE

Assignment: NONE

Optional Resources:

1. ["Cover Letters" \(Hiatt\)](#)
2. ["Confessions of a Brandeis Professor" \(Hiatt\)](#)

APRIL 9TH | INTERVIEWS & SALARY NEGOTIATIONS

In this class we will discuss **best practices for interviewing for a job** and how to **engage in salary negotiations**. We will hear from **an expert from the Hiatt Career Center**, who will share their insights on these topics. During class, we will also team up to **role play a Mock Interview (Presentation #3)**, which students should prepare ahead of time. Within one week of this class, students will submit **short paper #3 (Mock Interview Reflection)**.

Class Speaker: TBD (Hiatt Career Center)

Class Presentation: Presentation #3 (Mock Interviews)

Assignment: Short Paper #3 (Resume Dissection) (Due April 16th)

Optional Resources:

1. ["Forming Your Professional Identity" \(Hiatt\)](#)
2. ["I've Been Ghosted" \(Hiatt\)](#)
3. ["How to Negotiate a Salary" \(Gavin 2023\)](#)
4. ["The Central Role of the Ask in Gender Pay Inequality" \(Roussille 2022\)](#)