

COURSE SYLLABUS

POLI 4390: PRACTICUM PLACEMENT IN PUBLIC POLICY: NGOS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Winter 2019

Department of Political Science

Dalhousie University

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to provide students who have fourth-year standing in Political Science (or Cross-Listed programs such as Gender & Women's Studies or Law, Justice & Society) the opportunity to gain practical experience by working at a government or non-government, research, or advocacy organization that is instrumental in shaping public policy or advancing human rights; to learn about the services, projects, and campaigns undertaken by specific organizations; to apply and share the knowledge that they have gained from their academic studies in political theory, public policy, international relations, and/or human rights advocacy; and to become familiar with the day-to-day challenges of employment in government and non-government organizations and public services.

COURSE OVERVIEW AND REQUIREMENTS

By the first day of classes (Jan 7) you will learn your placement, and will have been introduced –over email—to your supervisor.

During the first week you must **arrange to meet with your supervisor to discuss your project** (if you have not done so already); familiarize yourself with the working arrangements; and work out a flexible schedule that will enable you to complete the required hours.

In keeping with the expectations of any 0.5 credit courses, students are required to spend one day per week (i.e., up to an average of 7.0 hours per week; or, if worked in a single day, 8 hours with up to one hour off for lunch) for a period of 11 weeks a selected placement agency, for a total of 77 hours. These hours will begin in the second week of classes, which for this term is January 14-18, with your first 7 hours being completed by the end of the week: Friday Jan 18th.

You will see in your schedule that the 'class' is scheduled for Monday evenings at 5:30; however this block of time is reserved ONLY for the 3 class/group meetings that we will hold in the term (discussed below). Our first group meeting, which everyone is required to attend, will be held on the **Monday, January 7** (i.e., the fourth week, after everyone has completed 14 hours in your placements) **in LSC-COMMON AREA C210**

The placements will run through to the end of second last week of classes, with your last 7 hours completed by Friday March 29.

Winter Study Break

You are not expected to work during the Winter Study Break (Feb 18-22), although you are welcome to negotiate this with your supervisor, if, for example there is a different time that you need to –or prefer to-- be away. To avoid any conflicts with exams or other end-of-term obligations for other courses, students are asked to have complete their projects/placements, and submitted their report by the last day of classes (April 8)

Flexibility

There is plenty of flexibility for determining your working schedule with your supervisor. For example, if it is more suitable for both of you, you may agree to work during the reading week, and simply end your practicum a week early. Or, if you are working on a project that requires an extensive time commitment for a short period of time –such as organizing a conference or public event—you may make an arrangement with your supervisor to work many of the required hours during that period, while taking a break in the preceding or subsequent weeks.

EVALUATION PROFILE

The course is evaluated on a pass/fail basis, with the following requirements:

1. Required hours

To pass the course, and obtain credit, the student must complete the required hours for the placement, which is 77 hours within a practicum placement or on a given project devised by the practicum supervisor (i.e., 7.0 hours per week for 11 weeks, in accordance with a schedule developed between the student and the placement supervisor and completed by the last day of classes. If the student stops attending the placement organization or putting in the required hours, without making the appropriate arrangements for make-up time, the course will be considered incomplete, and the student will NOT be able receive a ‘pass.’ In addition to this expectation:

2. Required Group Meetings, Presentations, and Public Poster Session (30%)

Unless otherwise notified, these meetings will be held on Monday from 5:30-7:30 in LSC Psych 4208 on the following dates:

- **January 7**
- **March 4**
- **March 18**
- **April 1**
- **April 8**

Students are required to attend five group meetings throughout the semester. The first session (January 7) will be an opportunity to meet one another and debrief on our experiences to date. We will also use this session to sign up for and discuss class presentations. The following three classes will be devoted to student poster presentations (10 minutes each) and class questions. These presentations should aim to 1) share information about the practicum and the organizations at which you are placed, 2) speak

on the challenges/issues that your experience with your organization has raised, and 3) any larger socio-political questions your experience working with this organization has raised for you.

Your posters should support your presentation and should be designed to share information about your organization and its mandate, and reflect on the role of your organization in the communit(ies) and the limitations (structural and otherwise) to such work. Students who are not presenting on any given day must be engaged audience members and ask at least one question per session.

On the date of the last day of class, April 8, we will hold a public poster session (space TBD). This session will be a casual opportunity to share your posters and information about your placement to interested members of the community.

1. Online Discussion Board (15%)

Prior to the start of your assignment (**no later than January 11**) each student will post a short 500 word description of the practicum to our online discussion board and an outline of their learning goals for the term. Each subsequent week (with the exception of Reading Week), students will post a short reflection on their assignments, addressing any challenges or learning opportunities that may have arisen throughout the week and/or questions or observations you may have about the broader line of work in which you are engaging. If, for some reason, you have not worked that week, you may instead write a short post reflecting on community organization and involvement. All discussion board entries for each week should be posted online no later than **Sunday 5 pm for the preceding week**.

2. Written Report (15%) (Due 8 April)

Students are required to submit a final written report (6-8 pages or 1500-2000 words), during the last week of classes. This report should draw from your weekly posts to reflect on your experience overall and especially on whether you feel you have successfully achieved (or have perhaps adapted) your initial learning goals for this class. Beyond your own personal touch and discussion of what you learned from this experience, the report needs to clearly specify a) the name and nature of the service or agency; b) the type of work it does, including, for instance, its mandate, mission, campaigns, etc.; and c) the specific project or work that you undertook, and what this entailed.

3. Satisfactory Review (40%)

Students are required to obtain satisfactory reviews provided by the placement agency, indicating that the student fulfilled the basic and general responsibilities in terms of regular and respectful communication, and timely attendance or work on a project in accordance with the schedule determined by the student and supervisor. Brief assessment forms will be provided to the supervisors, to be completed after each of the three months.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

For any reason, if you are not able to work in a given week, you are expected to make arrangements with your supervisor as to how you could make up these hours. Most

importantly, you are expected to inform your supervisor in advance of your absence, and propose an alternative arrangement to him/her.

There will be tremendous variation in the nature of the work and projects, depending on the organization or service. Ideally, the placement agency will devise a project or series of tasks that will enable you to learn about the nature and scope of the service they provide; the roles of different staff members; the types of projects or initiatives that are typically undertaken by them; and the challenges confronted with specific projects or campaigns.

In some instances, you may be assigned a specific research project by your supervisor, which you will undertake over the academic term and submit in your last week of service. In others, you may simply ‘shadow’ your supervisor or another employee, and assist them in day-to-day tasks. Others may entail working for two hours, three to four days per week, with some of this time spent away from the agency or business location. And still others may require a heavy time commitment for a week or two (such as assisting in organizing and/or attending a conference), with an extended break before or afterwards. Whatever the arrangement, it is hoped and expected that you and your supervisor will be clear to each other about your understandings and expectations, talk openly about them, and arrive at an arrangement that is beneficial to both you and the agency, such that both gain from the knowledge, assistance, and experience of the other.

Students are responsible for communicating regularly with your supervisor, for being prompt and reliable in attendance, and for ensuring that you are clear about your roles, tasks and expectations. If you have any concerns about the work or project, please feel free to speak to your supervisor about them.

At any time, if you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of your placement, please never hesitate to contact me at lr453470@dal.ca.