

COURSE SYLLABUS

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

Winter 2020

**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

Before the Winter break (December 2020), you will learn about your placement, and be introduced (through me, via email) to your potential supervisor, at which point you will take the lead in arranging a meeting with them, to discuss the project, and to arrange a schedule for it.

This meeting and/or contact with your supervisor will ideally happen at your earliest convenience: at least one of the supervisors will be leaving town once classes are

finished. Others may have concerns about the project and want to have the opportunity to consider something else; other supervisors may be very chill and in no rush to get together. Students are asked to make a point of confirming with me, via email, once this meeting has taken place, so I can relax and know that you're in good shape.

By the end of the first week of the Winter term (Jan 10) you will have spent your first 7 hours of your placement, in accordance with the arrangement made at your meeting with your supervisor. one responsibility will be to arrange a time to meet with our supervisor to discuss your project.

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 [12 weeks minus the Reading Week] for a total of 77 hours.

Class meetings:

You will see in your schedule that the 'class' is scheduled in the Academic Timetable for Tuesday evenings at 5:30-8:30 pm; 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 **Tuesday, January 28** (i.e., the fourth week, after everyone has completed 21 hours in your placements).

The placements will run through to the end of second last week of classes, with your last 7 hours completed by Friday March 27 [or, if you fall behind, and need to make up time, Friday April 3].

Winter Study Break

You are NOT expected to work during the Winter Study Break (Feb 17-21), 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.

Please make sure to remind your supervisors of this, especially since they are typically not on a Dalhousie / academic schedule and may not have occasion to be reminded otherwise.

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. What matters is that you are clear with each other about your expectations, and that you communicate about them –with both the supervisor and with me.

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

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

- **January 28**
- **February 25**
- **March 17**

Students need to attend three group meetings of those who are registered in the course, and which will be used to 1) share information about their practicum experience and the organizations at which they are placed; 2) to participate in a discussion of the ethics and politics related to the services they are working within; and 3) to plan a symposium on community work of the sort that you will be engaged in, and to speak on the challenges/issues that your experience with your organization has raised.

3. Symposium

Students will be required to attend and participate in a public symposium and Q&A in a public setting. The date of the symposium will be set only after we have the chance to meet as a group, and avoid scheduling conflicts, but we will aim for the 4th week of March, following our group meeting on March 17th (i.e., perhaps a late afternoon between Mar 24th and 27th).

The symposium will be a casual opportunity to provide information regarding the work and related challenges of your organization, in dialogue with others, and with a view to larger questions about the role of your organization in the communit(ies); the limitations (structural and otherwise) to such work.

You can anticipate providing a presentation at the symposium that takes roughly 5-10 minutes – in response to questions that we will collectively prepare for at the previous meetings.

Throughout the term, as different questions or issues arise, for you, you will want to consider what kinds of questions would best enable you to discuss them, or and to prepare questions on topics that you would like to hear others address. This will be an opportunity for students to share their experiences, including through discussions about the about the work of their organizations and the projects that they have underway. Attendance at meetings is mandatory, and will account for 20% of the course requirements.

4. Written Report (40%) (Due April 3)

Students are required to submit a final written report (7-9 pages or 1800-2500 words), due on or before the last meeting of the practicum group during the last week of classes. This report may be descriptive or analytical: your objective will be to provide a summary and description of the project that you have undertaken and/or the work that you engaged in. This report may then be made available to interested practicum students in the coming years, to enable them to see the range or work and the types of projects completed for this course and/or the nature and scope of the services provided by placement agencies. To facilitate writing this report, you are strongly advised to keep a weekly diary on your activities, which may be compiled, re-written, and submitted at the end of the term. 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. (40%)

5. 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 forms will assessment forms will be provided to the supervisors, to be completed after each of the three months. (40%)

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.

The placement location and supervisor has been arranged by the course coordinator. Once you, the student, have been informed of your placement, you are responsible for setting an initial meeting with your supervisor, and determining a working schedule that suits both of you and that enables you to fulfill the course requirements of ‘up to one day per week’ in the placement or on a given project. **This must be done BEFORE YOUR PLACEMENT BEGINS.**

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 m.denike@dal.ca.