

The University of Texas at Austin  
Department of Government  
Summer 2022  
GOV 374N, Unique Number: 81225  
Web-Based

# POLITICAL INTERNSHIPS

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## **Course Description**

The Government Department internship program provides students an opportunity to combine work experience in government and politics with academic coursework. This course emphasizes guiding students through the design and execution of a carefully defined small-scale research project, and an analysis of their research that can be communicated intelligibly to a public audience using evidence-based arguments. The coursework is designed to sharpen students' ability to use basic academic research skills as tools in a professional environment, and to convey the results of their research in ways that contribute to public discourse about politics, policy, and government.

Most of students' time will be directed toward performing the duties of their internships in a manner that reflects positively on them and on The University of Texas at Austin. A solid performance as an intern provides a rich learning experience, the possibility of future intellectual and professional opportunities, and also reflects well on the program, paving the way for future students to have the same opportunities that current interns enjoy.

However, interns should be clear about the nature of this course. Students are not receiving credit from the Government Department primarily for fulfilling their internships. Students receive grades and credit for completing the internships in conjunction with guided coursework.

**Supervisor evaluations are taken into account in assigning grades per the grading criteria below, but 75% of your course grade is based on assessment of academic work completed for the course.**

## **Prerequisites**

12 semester hours of coursework in government.

## **Independent Inquiry:**

This course carries the Independent Inquiry flag. Independent Inquiry courses are designed to engage you in the process of inquiry over the course of a semester, providing you with the opportunity for independent investigation of a question, problem, or project related to your

major. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from the independent investigation and presentation of your own work.

### **Textbooks**

None.

### **Technical Requirements**

#### **Computer Hardware & Software Requirements**

- Windows or Mac laptop or desktop computer
- Modern and updated operating system (MacOS or Windows)
- Chrome (highly recommended), Safari or Firefox
- 5Mbps internet connect speed (please check your speed here)
- Ensure your microphone and webcam work properly if your course requires them

#### **Tips for the Best Class Experience**

- Close all unnecessary browser windows, tabs and applications/ programs
  - Streaming music services (Pandora, Spotify, Tidal, etc.)
  - Social media sites
  - YouTube, Twitch, etc.
  - Online/offline gaming
  - Texting applications (iMessage, WhatsApp, Discord, etc.)
- Clear the browser's cache before class
- Check to make sure your computer is free of viruses, malware, and spyware
- Make sure your computer has all system updates in place
- Disable pop-up blockers
- To watch in full-screen, use the video player's full-screen button (bottom right corner) rather than clicking to expand the browser window

#### **Need Additional Help?**

- Click "Online Course Tech Support" in the left navigation menu of your Canvas course.

### **Course Requirements & Grading:**

Your grade will be based on multiple project assignments, cumulating in a final research project, and supervisor evaluations (in addition to some practice assignments). To receive credit and a passing grade for this class, all of the following must be satisfied:

- Completion of 4 assignments connected to the research project (see below).
- Completion of 6 ungraded exercises related to the research project
- Work hours:
  - At least 17 hours per week, beginning the first week of the semester and concluding the last week of the semester.<sup>1</sup>
  - The minimal total hours worked should be 150 hours.
  - How you track this is up to you and your supervisor, but it should be verifiable if necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: The calendar for the summer session has a mid-week start and end dates

- If you want to work more hours this is at your discretion.
- Summer internships vary a great deal in terms of hours worked per week- some work more hours per week for fewer weeks.
- The minimum requirement is to accumulate to 150-hour minimum within the 9 weeks between the first week of class and finals week.
- Two evaluations by the internship supervisor.

#### Grading

Research Assignment #1: Proposal	15%
Research Assignment #2: Data Graphic Prototype	15%
Research Assignment #3: Text Draft	15%
Research Assignment #4: Final Research Project	25%
Practice Assignment Exercises	5%
Midterm Supervisor Evaluation	10%
Final Supervisor Evaluation	15%

#### Grading Scale for Final Grades

A 93-100  
A- 90-92  
B+ 87-89  
B 83-86  
B- 80-82  
C+ 77-79  
C 73-76  
C- 70-72  
D 60-69  
F 0-59

**N.B.: All requirements must be fulfilled to receive credit and a passing grade for the course.**

#### **Semester Research Project**

This project is designed to sharpen students' abilities to research and analyze questions related to politics and government using primary data, and to present the results of your research in a way that is both informative and accessible to a public audience. The final product of the research assignment should incorporate original text and graphic presentation of data presented in a webpage or other digital document posted on a publicly accessible location on the Internet. The default media for producing the final product will be the public publishing platform Medium, at Medium.com, unless students request and receive instructor approval to use another platform that meets the requirements of the assignment.

Your project will focus on a question related to politics and/or government in Texas. The final product of the project will combine polished textual explanation accompanied by research-based digital graphics. The final product should convey your interpretation of your research in a way that would be of interest to readers in the general public.

The project is organized into a series of assignments. Each assignment will generate feedback for proceeding to the next stage of the project. The descriptions below provide an overview of the assignments and their point values. All stages of the assignment are graded on a 100-point scale, then weighed as indicated in your final grade. Specific rubrics used to grade submissions can be found in each assignment's module in Canvas.

Due dates for each assignment may be found in the course schedule and in Canvas. Log into Canvas to find the specific assignment page and grading rubrics for each assignment.

#### Research Assignment #1: Proposal

Value: 15% of final grade

Length: 250-500 words

Research Assignment #1 is a written description of the specific question your research addresses, and how you will go about answering that question. The proposal should indicate what question you seek to answer, why it is relevant to Texas government and politics, and specific identification and justification of your primary data sources. You will need to identify a very specific question to address – remember, your final product will not be a major research project. Rather, it will be a relatively short exploration of a relevant problem that you use relevant data to explain to a general audience – not an academic audience. Your justification should avoid partisan advocacy. Stay focused on why the question you are answering is relevant for policy, government, or the political system. You should list both primary and secondary sources with your proposal, whether you quote them directly or not. **Reports based on other people's analysis of primary source data are not sufficient primary sources, even though other people's work should provide the context for the work you are doing. Overreliance on these sources will result in a penalty equivalent to one letter grade at each stage of the project. This project is supposed to push students to engage with raw data, not summarize analysis published by others. Please clarify with the instructor if you have questions about what counts as raw data.**

#### Research Assignment #2: Data and Graphics

Value: 15% of final grade

Assignment #2 requires students to compile data you have gathered for a secondary analysis in a spreadsheet, and to produce initial versions of graphics that may be used to present data in your final published version in Medium. This should include presenting your data in tabular form (e.g. a spreadsheet in Excel or Google Spreadsheets) and an initial attempt at graphical presentation of all of your data (i.e. plot, chart, etc.). You should ***not*** reproduce numbers, averages, or percentages from a single report based on someone else's analysis, even if you can put it in tabular form yourself. The best assignments will find raw data from governmental or research sources and compile a spreadsheet out of the data. In some cases, students may need to compile spreadsheets using multiple sources which may include reports as well as tabular data from official sources. In the latter cases, over-reliance on data compiled by others will be evaluated as less satisfactory than compilation of raw data. Product should be in digital form - you can upload either an Excel spreadsheet with graphics created in the file, or link to a Google Spreadsheet

using your UT Google account. You MUST include a verifiable source -- via citation and when possible URL -- for all data presented. All graphics should be clearly and comprehensively labeled.

### Research Assignment #3: Text Draft

Value: 15% of final grade

Length: 500-1000 words

A first, edited draft of the textual explanation of your data. At this stage of the project, you want to move from thinking about your work as research and move toward composing a short article that is engaging to a what you should think about as an interested general reader rather than an academic audience or someone giving you a grade. You need to write an article that tells your reader something interesting through an evidence-based discussion of policy or politics. Don't write like this is a student paper; rather, write as if were an article for public consumption -- which, when you post the final version to the web, is what it will be. However, you must follow rules of attribution: cite all sources you use for both background information and the data in your analysis. Any thought that did not originate in your mind or in your analysis should be cited with a relevant source.

Overall, keep in mind the role of this assignment in the overall arc of the research project. The project has been broken down into discrete stages designed to structure your research and thinking. The objective of this stage is to think about the product of the research stage, especially the data and graphics submitted for the previous assignment, and assemble a written analysis based on the data you've gathered, how you are thinking about it, and the text you will present in your final public project.

The four key goals of this assignment form the basis of the grading rubric:

1. Refinement of the scope of your project
2. Understanding the result of your research and analysis
3. Providing context for the subject of your research, especially the political or policy debate surrounding the topic you are discussing
4. The production of a finished draft that meets the required textual component of the final digital media project

Be sure to remember that you need to be clear about the sources of your data and interpretations. Using hyperlinks is a good way to do this, given the format of this assignment.

### Research Assignment #4: Final Digital Project

Value: 25% of final grade

Length: 500-1000 words

A final draft that combines your textual analysis with a visualization of your data based on your data graphic prototype, which reflects further refinement in your research and thinking, as well as the feedback you received on both. The final project should be constructed in Medium.com, a publishing platform. You may use another platform if you have a good reason to do so -- it must

be approved in advance by the instructor and it must be readable via a common web browser (Chrome, Firefox, Safari).

### **Grading Rubric Exercises**

The course modules in Canvas include short exercises designed to familiarize you with the expectations of your work during the first three assignments in your research project. You will download a document and use the grading rubric to assign the assignment a grade based on the rubric. These assignments are interwoven into video discussions at each stage. You are required to submit the rubric, but the work is credit/no credit. Completing and submitting all of the rubrics is worth 5% of your final grade in the course.

### **Internship Supervisor Contact Form**

Complete and submit a brief online form in Qualtrics (link in Canvas modules) that provides information about your internship and contact information for your supervisor. This is mandatory and should be submitted no later than **June 9**.

### **Supervisor Evaluations**

Supervisors must evaluate interns twice, at mid-semester and at the semester's end. You should share the Google Form links for each evaluation with your supervisor and ask them to fill out and submit the form online by the due date.

These evaluations are due **July 1 and July 28**.

Interns should provide supervisors with plenty of lead time, and make sure forms are available to them.

### **University of Texas Honor Code**

“The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.”

### **Student Honor Code**

“As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.”

### **Email**

No assignment is to be e-mailed to me. Also, I regularly check my e-mail, but sometimes I am unable to respond quickly. Please allow 24 hours for an e-mail response. Any grievances involving the class must be handled during my office hours. Please exercise proper e-mail etiquette (for etiquette tips see <https://www.netmanners.com/e-mail-etiquette-tips/>). Finally, make sure to check the syllabus or Canvas first before sending an e-mail. In many cases they will answer your question.

**Late Penalties:** For all assignments, late submissions (after 11:59 PM CDT on the due date) are subject to a 10% reduction in points assigned per day. No exceptions.

### **Procedures for Dealing with Grade/Evaluation Concerns**

Grade/evaluation concerns will only be considered if the following procedure is followed:

All grade complaints must be **TYPED** and must clearly express the student's specific concerns. These written statements must be accompanied by citations of support from course materials, i.e. readings, textbook, and/or lecture notes, in order to ensure accuracy. Written statements will not be considered until one week **AFTER** the assignment is returned to students. This allows the student time to reread his/her answers and think carefully about what improvements could have been made. Grievances will not be considered once two weeks have passed.. Finally, submitting a grade grievance will result in a complete re-grade of the assignment.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

According to the Institutional Rules, scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and falsifying academic records. In the event that a student violates the University policy on scholastic dishonesty, he or she will be subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity web site at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/academicintegrity.php>.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>.

### **Religious Holy Day Observance**

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

### **Campus Safety**

Please note the following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety>:

- Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.
- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation should inform the instructor in writing during the first week of class.

- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors.
- Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050.
- Further information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: <http://www.utexas.edu/emergency>.

### **Course Outline:**

The table below shows the course outline, including assignment deadlines.

<b>Date</b>		<b>Notes</b>
June 2	First day of 9-week session	Your internship should be set up and you should start working this week if you haven't already.
June 8	Submit Internship supervisor contact information	Submit via Canvas Assignment
	Proposal Exercise Part 1	Submit via Canvas Assignment
June 17	Proposal Exercise Part 2	Submit via Canvas Assignment
	Proposal Submission	Submit via Canvas Assignment
July 1	Midterm Supervisor Evaluation Due	Use Google Form (Link on Canvas).
July 5	Data Exercise Part 1	Submit via Canvas Assignment
	Data Exercise Part 2	Submit via Canvas Assignment
	Data and Graphics Assignment	Submit via Canvas Assignment
July 15	Text Draft Exercise Part 1	Submit via Canvas Assignment
	Text Draft Exercise Part 2	Submit via Canvas Assignment
	Text Draft Submission	Submit via Canvas Assignment
July 26	Final Digital Project Submission	Post to web, submit URL to Canvas

July 28	Final Supervisor Evaluation Due	Use Google Form (link on Canvas). <b>Be sure your supervisor is aware of this deadline and is provided with the appropriate form, as there is little margin for late evaluations given grade submission deadlines.</b>
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