

URBS/PLSI 603/604: INTERNSHIP COURSE
Spring 2008

Urban Studies Program

Professor Raquel Pinderhughes

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This class meets every other Thursday from 4:10-5:50 in BUS 116 with one exception. Instead of meeting on March 6 and March 20 we will meet on March 13 and March 20. Please note this exception in your scheduler.

The internship experience provides students with an opportunity to gain work experience in their professional area(s) of interest. It is a required core course in Urban Studies. The purpose of the internship seminar is to provide students with an opportunity to develop professionally by (a) reflecting upon their internship experience, (b) applying what they are learning in the classroom to a professional setting, and (c) developing basic professional skills.

Journal writings and reflection assignments must be handed in as hard copy, not electronic. Unless the professor is alerted ahead of time to the necessity for missing a class, students will be penalized one/half grade for each day that work is handed in late.

Supervisor's evaluations must be received two weeks before the end of class. Please notify your supervisors of this early in the semester and please make sure that they meet this deadline. If they come in late your grade will be not be processed on time.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. High quality work performance. As an intern, you will be working with an organization. Make sure that you understand what you are expected to do and do it as well as possible. Be aware that you represent the university to the larger community and the impression you create will have long-lasting effects. Present yourself as a professional. You are contributing your time and talent to organizations whose missions you support and you are contributing an important public service to the community.

2. Enriched academic learning. The internship is part of an academic curriculum that is intended to supplement the more "theoretical" learning of books and the classroom with learning "in the field" or learning from practical experience. It is this learning which is the basis of the academic credit, which is awarded to the internship. This learning requires you to become a participant observer. Observe continually and closely as you are participating and reflect continually on what you are observing. Ask yourself, how does this internship relate to your broader academic and professional interests? Go beyond the basic job requirements and do such things as read material available in the office, attend meetings and seek out opportunities for discussion with your co-workers. Articulate your observations and analysis both in the internship seminar and in the written assignments.

The process of careful observation and description is the first step in developing further ideas and questions. Ask yourself repeatedly and discuss both in your journals and in the seminar questions such as:

- What is actually happening here?
- What am I learning about in this situation?
- What is the significance of this event in relation to some broader perspective? What does it show us about, for instance, politics, economics, "bureaucracy," city planning, affordable housing, social inequality, sustainability, etc. It is up to you to develop the broader perspective.

- How does it relate to theories and ideas discussed in classes and readings? Does it reinforce or challenge them?
- What broader questions does it raise?

3. Professional development. The internship allows you to develop knowledge, skills, interpersonal skills, and personal contacts which will contribute to your career development. It offers you the opportunity to see how you like working in the field/organization of your choice, to obtain some of that critical experience which so many jobs require, to learn about the employment picture in this field, to gain invaluable recommendations from people in the field, and to begin to develop your own network of contacts who will help you gain access to this field if you choose to pursue it further.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- (1) Fieldwork:** 12-15 hours a week for 15 weeks (or the equivalent, for a minimum total of 180 hours).
(2) Seminar: 2 hours every other week.
(3) Journal Entries and Reflection Assignments: Further guidelines and supplement topics are listed below.
(4) Seminar Leader: Two students per class period will be asked to lead seminar discussion. The themes that we will focus on are listed below.
(5) Professional Resume & Cover Letter: Revised with Internship.
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COURSE COMPONENTS:

- (1) Work Agreement:** The work agreement is discussed, written up, and signed by you and your supervisor working together. One copy is filed with your professor, and you should also make a copy for yourself. The agreement must include five components: work objectives, educational objectives, provision for learning about the overall operation of the organization, provision for regular meetings with your supervisor, and your work schedule. Guidelines will be distributed in class.
- (2) Class Attendance:** The seminar meets every other week for two hours. The purpose of the class is to allow you to learn from the instructor and each other. Sharing your observations as participants and developing connections between these observations and the broader issues addressed in your academic curriculum is the most important function. Helping each other develop strategies for dealing with problems and getting the most out of the experience is also important. Finally, the seminar offers an extraordinary opportunity to learn about different types of organizations and career opportunities.
- (3) Written Work: Journal Entries and Reflection Assignments. Two typewritten pages of your weekly journal entry must be handed in each week.** The journal offers you an opportunity to *describe* and *reflect* upon what you have been doing at your internship. Spell check and proof read your work before you hand it in. Reflection Assignments relate to more academic/theoretical topics that force you to think critically and/or conduct some background research.
- (4) Thematic Discussion Groups:** You will work in teams of 2-4 students to lead a 30-minute class discussion on a theme which has been determined before hand. To do this, you must meet with your partner(s) and prepare for the topic you have been assigned. Prepare your class facilitation notes before hand and be prepared to share your own experience and facilitate the discussion.

Suggested Themes

- a) Identifying your strengths and weaknesses

- b) Working with a supervisor
- c) Working in the non-profit, public and private sectors
- d) Effective professional relationships
- e) Working in teams
- f) Preparing a resume and cover letter for a job application
- g) Preparing for a job interview
- h) Preparing for graduate school
- i) Time management

(5) Professional Resume and Cover Letter: By the end of the course, you are expected to have developed a resume and a sample cover letter that are of professional quality.

REFLECTION ASSIGNMENTS: There are three required writing assignments in which you reflect on your internship and professional work experience.

GRADES

In this course grades reflect the quality of your work in class and in your internship. Your grade will be based on: supervisor's evaluation (about 60%) and the instructor's assessment of your fieldwork and learning, explained below: (about 40%)

- *journals*: informative, thoughtful, including some detailed description of your experience and some specific reflections on what you have observed and learned;
- *reflection assignments*: addressing the topics enumerated in the syllabus, thoughtfully, and as thoroughly as possible within the space and time limits;
- *class attendance and participation*: regular participation, facilitating discussion and helping to raise broader issues for analysis.

JOURNAL ENTRIES AND REFLECTION ASSIGNMENTS

JOURNAL ENTRIES SHOULD CONTAIN:

- **Log**: a brief list of the days/hours you worked and the major tasks you worked on.
- **Description**: a brief but clear description of some of the more interesting or noteworthy things you did during this time.
- **Reflections**: thoughts about what you've done, learned, thought about, had trouble with, etc. The focus of your discussion is up to you, but you should try to address some of the broader kinds of questions posed throughout this syllabus, and explore some connections between what you're learning in your internship and what you're learning in your academic classes and from other sources (e.g. the news media).
- **Samples of your work**: it also sometimes helps to include samples of work you're doing and describing in your journals (e.g. a survey form, a newsletter, etc).

Suggested questions for journal and seminar discussions include:

1. What was the most interesting thing that you did this week? Why was it interesting?
2. What was the most difficult thing that you did this week? Why was it so difficult, how did you deal with it, do any problems remain?
3. What was the most important thing that you learned this week? Important relative to your academic interests (e.g. your coursework) or more general social concerns (e.g. current issues, political developments, policy problems)?
4. What are you learning about the effectiveness of your organization in addressing the issues you are concerned about? For example, if you are interested in affordable housing, working at a planning department, and are interested in the effectiveness of city planning as a way of helping

to increase affordable housing, does city planning seem to offer an effective tool for this purpose? Why or why not?)

5. What are you learning about those issues and how to effectively address these issues?
6. Would this organization provide you with opportunities for professional growth?

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS AND THEMATIC DISCUSSION TOPICS

1/24 Course Overview: Course overview; clarification of placement process and discussion of placement interviews; placement assistance.

Your journal entry should focus on your placement interview(s) and, if you've started working, what your first days/weeks/months were like.

Class Discussion: Placement selection and development, advice and experience; objectives and expectations.

Faculty Led Thematic Discussion: Identifying your professional strengths and weaknesses

2/7 Placement Assessment.

Reflection Assignment #1 Due: Objectives and Expectations

It is extremely important for you to articulate your goals and interests in this internship in order to be able to pursue them effectively. Internship supervisors are almost always impressed by interns who demonstrate curiosity, interest, and initiative: interns who ask questions, who seek out additional information and opportunities for additional learning (e.g. meetings, conversations). Not to be a pest, of course, but to show an energetic and informed interest. So, it is extremely important that you have a clear sense of what you want to learn about and accomplish in this internship.

This reflection assignment must address the following questions:

- What are your overall educational objectives, and how does the internship contribute to these objectives?
- What do you hope to gain from the internship -- what kinds of knowledge, skills, work experience, contacts, career and personal development?
- What broader issues do you hope to explore? What courses have you had or are you taking that will be particularly relevant to your internship experience? What questions about the relationship of theory to practice do you hope to explore? Give some specific examples of courses you have taken that may be relevant to your internship and of general issues and/or questions that you would like to be able to explore during the internship.
- Finally, why did you choose this particular placement? Describe briefly the job you expect to be doing and how it will contribute to your overall objectives.

WORK AGREEMENTS are due approximately two weeks after you begin work.

Discuss the work agreement with your supervisor, then write a draft version of your work agreement and submit it to your supervisor for comments, then incorporate those comments into a final version that will be typed, signed and submitted to the instructor with copies for yourself and your supervisor.

Faculty Led Thematic Discussion: The Professional Workplace

Student Led Thematic Discussion: Working with a Supervisor

2/21 Agency Mission, Accomplishments and Problems

Reflection Assignment #2 due: Agency description (1-3 pgs.)

This writing assignment is an important opportunity for you to make sure that you are getting "the big picture" with regard to your work. It will require some research: use of agency documents and perhaps interviews with your supervisor and others in the organization. Be sure to explain why you need the information. You must indicate the sources of your information (e.g. annual reports, interviews), using appropriate references and citations. It should include the following components:

- Origins, brief history of the agency;
- Overall goals, organizational mission;
- Main types of activities and how they contribute to the overall goals and mission;
- Major accomplishments; contribution to the larger community;
- Resources: budget & sources; staff & qualifications; etc;
- Organization chart; your position within it;
- Political factors with which the organization must deal; how it does so.
- Challenges faced by the organization in meeting its objectives.

Student Led Thematic Discussion: Working in Teams

3/13 The Work World

Now that most of you have been working for at least a couple of weeks, it's a good time to review your internship to make sure it's working as well as possible. If you see problems, there's time to suggest improvements. The main points to consider include:

- *Clarity of work expectations:* do you have a clear job description? Do you and your supervisor share a clear understanding of what you are supposed to do?
- *Resources and qualifications necessary to do the job:* access to needed resources; feasibility of the job given your qualifications and time.
- *Importance of your work to the organization:* are you really needed?
- *Relationship with supervisor and others:* do you have adequate access to your supervisor; can you get enough guidance to do your work?
- *Opportunity to pursue your own educational/career objectives:* to learn about subjects you are interested in; to develop skills, gain experience, make contacts, etc. (Refer back to JS #1, goals and expectations)

Student Led Thematic Discussion: Working in the Non-profit, Public and Private Sectors

- Governance
- Basic differences in financing and tracking financing
- Employment and promotion
- Client base

3/20: The Professional Role

- Professional standards of conduct
- Organizational standards and expectations
- Individual standards and expectations of supervisor(s)
- Language, dress, phone use, computer use, food/eating on the job

Student Led Thematic Discussion: Effective Professional Relationships

4/3 Preparing for a Job Interview - For this session prepare a resume and a cover letter that you would prepare for a professional position.

Student Led Thematic Discussion: Preparing a Resume & Cover Letter, Preparing for a Job Interview

4/17 From Internship to Professional position

Reflection Assignment #3 due: Revised Resume and Cover Letter

Class discussion: internship contribution to career development; briefing on career opportunities in your field of interest. It would be helpful to make this the subject of your journal discussion this week. Address the following questions in your journal.

What is your agency like as a place to work? What do you like most/least about it? Is there a good fit between the organization's mission statement and what it is able to accomplish? How has your experience affected your job aspirations? Identify your own criteria for satisfying work? What have you learned about career opportunities and qualifications in your area of interest? What have you learned about finding and getting a job in this field? It would be very useful to talk with your supervisor and co-workers both about their feelings about the job and about career opportunities in this field. Be prepared to brief your classmates about what you have learned about employment opportunities in this field.

5/1 Reflection

Reflection Assignment #4 due: Final Assessment and Evaluation of Your Internship Experience

The final reflection assignment is an evaluation of your internship experience. It has three separate parts. They must be typed on three separate pieces of paper because they are used and filed in three different places.

- (1) Overall placement assessment.** What is your final assessment of this organization as a place for an internship? Please include a brief but specific description of the kind of work you did (or that interns can do), the kind of learning that was possible, the kind of qualifications an intern should have, the kinds of difficulties an intern might anticipate at this placement, and the major benefits of this internship. Based on your experience, what advice would you give to other students considering an internship here? Please include your name, the name of the organization, and the date, so that I can file this for future students.
- (2) Overall curriculum assessment.** What courses have been most helpful to you in this internship? What changes would you suggest in the courses you have taken and/or in the overall curriculum of your major?
- (3) Self-assessment and debriefing.** How would you evaluate your own effort as an intern? What criteria would you use, and how well do you think you measure up to those criteria? What would you do differently next time?

5/15 Summary Session

Student Led Thematic Discussion: Preparing to Apply to Graduate School

For this session, prepare the following sets of written documents:

- List of your professional areas of interest
- The required or preferred credentials for professional work in your areas of interest
- Possible schools and programs that you would like to attend
- Entry requirements of these schools and programs
- Application process and deadlines for various schools