

# **GVPT377: Experiential Learning**

## **Government & Politics Internship**

University of Maryland, College Park

Spring 2023  
Dr. Candace Turitto

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Office Hours: Email me at the address below for an appt on Zoom or in person or on the phone

Office Location: Tydings 1147

Class Location: KEY 0116

### **Class Meetings**

Wednesday, Feb 22 – Class 6:30-9:15pm

Wednesday, Mar 29 – Class 6:30-9:15pm

Wednesday, Apr 26 – Class 6:30-9:15pm

### **Class Location**

KEY 0116 (next door to Tydings)

### **Course Description and Goals**

This course has been developed to supplement political internship experiences. In addition to the requirements you must meet for your internship position (hours per week, professional duties, projects, etc.), we will progress through the activities and assignments in this course together. Each of these activities are intended to further develop each student into a knowledgeable, respectable, and successful member of their internship office. Additionally, this course aims to provide students with a window into other related or interesting fields of employment in the nation's capital in order to provide a wide-ranging experience of career paths beyond the student's own internship.

This course relies on each student's personal internship experience. Firstly, it is targeted toward helping students achieve their personal and professional goals as interns. To this end, the course provides some readings to be discussed in our first session which will provide guidance on how to excel in an undergraduate internship. Students will also be asked to complete periodic journals with thoughtful reflection given to the tasks and duties they have been assigned or have accomplished, along with future goals to be

tackled in the internship. Additionally, this course is also targeted at facilitating clear and consistent communication *between* students. To accomplish this, each student should be prepared to share their experiences in class where applicable and listen respectfully as other students share theirs.

You should come into this class eager to hear about your peers' experiences, not only to share your own. While it is understood that some internship placements carry less interest to some people than other placements do, each student should also understand the value in learning that he or she DOES NOT want to pursue a certain career path. Moreover, facilitating these conversations in class allows those students who are not entirely satisfied with their own placement to have the opportunity to explore other possibilities by proxy of their classmates' experiences.

Finally, each student will also be responsible for an organizational profile and final career report to explore and thoroughly evaluate potential future career options. The former pushes each student to look beyond their immediate surroundings to find other interesting opportunities and career goals, and the latter provides the student's formal evaluation of their own internship office and experience over the semester.

### **Primary Learning Objectives:**

- *Professional Interaction and Effective Communication: Students will demonstrate clear and professional communication skills in large and small groups, as well as one-on-one. This learning objective is aimed at improving both spoken and written communications in formal settings.*
- *Active Citizenship and Civic Engagement: Students will demonstrate a knowledge and awareness of contemporary issues, political institutions, and problems in the community in their historical context. Additionally, students are expected to display a thorough understanding of the importance of community and civic involvement and leadership.*

### **Problems**

If at any point you feel unsuccessful, uncomfortable, etc. in your internship or office, please let me know asap. In many cases, it is normal for interns to feel unchallenged or sometimes "bored" at work (we will talk about how to avoid these feelings), but even so, letting me or someone else know that something doesn't feel right might help. I will also provide my direct contact information to each of you – please call me if you are in trouble or need immediate resolution to any issue.

## Readings

Readings will be minimal but required. Any required readings will be provided via ELMS in advance of each class meeting.

All students should also regularly read a reliable news source (e.g., Washington Post, New York Times, Vox Sentences) as often as possible, since a thorough understanding of current events is an essential component to our course's purpose, and likely as well to your internship itself. The discussion board on ELMS (see assignments below) should be used as an opportunity for each student to share and gain something newsworthy from the week.

Please Note: Additional (required) readings may always be announced and distributed for discussions at the instructor's discretion.

## Class Communication

Important communication regarding the course will be conducted during class meetings or as Announcements on ELMS. This includes any changes/additions to the syllabus, announcements, and the like. Each student is responsible for staying apprised of these communications.

## Requirements and Grading

Assignments/Activities	% of Final Grade
Attendance – REQUIRED (3)	[10%]
Bi-Weekly Journals (4)	[20%]
Current Events Articles (9)	[15%]
Organizational Profile (4-5 pgs)	[15%]
Research Paper (5-7 pgs)	[20%]
Internship Reflection (2-3 pgs)	[10%]
Internship Evaluation ( <i>from Supervisor</i> )	[10%]

**Attendance and Participation:** You are a responsible adult. Therefore, as you have been provided with the syllabus, attendance is now YOUR responsibility. I will not send reminder emails of our classes. You will manage your own schedule and be responsible for it. Be sure that your internship supervisor understands that these classes are IN-PERSON and REQUIRED for your grade.

If you are going to miss class, you are required to email me regarding your absence in advance of the class (or as soon as possible) and to provide documentation to support your excused absence, if requested. The reason for your absence must be reasonable and acceptable. Consistent with this, excused absences occur due to illness, religious observance, participation in University activities at the request of University authorities, or compelling circumstances beyond the student's control. Please note that extracurricular campus activities, even if they are related to politics are not acceptable excuses for missing class – e.g., if you're the President of the College Democrats on campus and you have a meeting the same night we have class, you're going to miss that meeting, because you have class. Additionally, if your internship supervisor asks you to staff a meeting or event that occurs during a class meeting, you need to decline – if the experience is literally once in a lifetime (like meeting the President or a SC Justice), let me know. A committee meeting or happy hour event is NOT a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Students will only be allowed to make up required assignments with a verifiable excused absence or delay in reaching a deadline.

**In-Depth Insights:** In each of our class meetings, a portion of students will give In-Depth Insights into their internship so far. If you are absent when you are called upon to share, that will suck. When you are present, know that this is not a chance to pontificate, but rather 4-5 minutes in which you should answer the following questions:

- 1) *Where are you interning, what's your position?*
- 2) *What are the top 2-3 things you've been responsible for doing at your internship?*
- 3) *What's the best thing that's happened via your internship so far?*
- 4) *What's the worst thing?*
- 5) *What's the biggest lesson you've learned so far? About office life, yourself, other people, whatever. Think in terms of what you can share with your pals in this group so they can learn the lesson with you.*

**Bi-Weekly Journals:** 1-2 pages, double-spaced; Each student will keep a weekly log of internship activities and happenings (sentences, not bullet points). *At the end of this syllabus, you will see enumerated prompts for these journal entries.* If it's a slow couple of weeks, these prompts may be the bulk of the journal's content. If it's an exciting couple of weeks, there could be much more (remember, these are your memories too, don't be stingy on the details!). Journals will be submitted every other week via ELMS. Again, take note of the due dates and manage your own schedule appropriately.

If you have not yet started your internship (or your internship has ended before the end of the semester), you should still submit a journal entry. If there is a specific journal prompt that is not yet applicable (if you haven't started yet), return to that prompt when you can address it. If your internship is over and there are still journal prompts, answer them as best you can; if they no longer apply, please give a general update about your last couple of weeks. While journals are not graded firmly on their content, these prompts are designed to improve the quality of your internship, particularly since we only meet three times over the semester. Please feel encouraged to address these topic prompts as thoroughly and honestly as possible, knowing that myself and/or any TA or grader we have will be the only people to read your entries.

**Weekly Current Events Articles:** 1 paragraph; On Friday of each week, I will open a discussion board on ELMS. Each student is responsible for posting the bestest, greatestest article they've read that week, and including a short description of what stands out to them about the article (the subject, the writing, the visuals, whatever). The board will only open on Friday, and will close each Sunday at midnight – posts will not be accepted late for these weekly discussion boards.

**Organization Profile:** 4-5 pgs, double-spaced, exploring an organization you might have interest in working with during your career. **Preparation for the project will include an informational interview with a member of the chosen organization.** Profiles that do not include expressly identified interviewees are not acceptable. Do not interview someone you cannot identify by name in the assignment. The organization you choose cannot be your own current/past internship, a current classmate's internship, or arise from any nepotistic connection. Depending on the size of our class, we may have a "no-no" list for this assignment – places NOT to target, because someone else in the course currently interns there. Instead of doing this assignment on that office/dept, talk to your classmate!

Please note that this is a writing assignment, and should be in the form of a well-structured paper. Do not just post the question prompts with answers – construct a prose.

**Research Paper:** 5-7 pgs, double-spaced, detailing a research topic of each student's choosing, which is also relevant to your internship office's purview, purpose, and/or goals. Each paper should briefly introduce the topic's importance to the internship office, but otherwise is free to explore the topic as desired. As a bona fide research paper, however, this paper should have a very clear thesis, and must be properly cited and well-sourced.

**Internship Reflection:** 2-3 pgs, double-spaced, evaluating internship experience and office (how was it, what did you work on, what did you learn, how does it fit into the larger political context, what went well, what went poorly and how will you address it in the future, what's next, is this a good place for future interns, etc.). In short, reflect on your experience in a longer journal entry.

**Internship Evaluation** – Each student is responsible for providing their supervisor's contact information (part of an early journal entry prompt). Instructor will reach out to solicit, provide, and chase evaluation. Student will be contacted if necessary and will be expected to assist in chasing the evaluation at such time if asked to do so. Remind your supervisor that this evaluation counts toward your final grade in this course.

## **Course Schedule - Topics & Assignments** [Subject to change with notice from Instructor]

1.25.23 thru 2.10.23 – Get good at your internship – *contact me if you need any guidance!*

2.12.23– Best Article on ELMS

2.19.23– Journal #1 and Best Article on ELMS

2.22.23– **CLASS #1** – Intros to each other and internships; discuss assignments; talk about discipline, feedback/criticism, making mistakes; **RESUME WORKSHOP** - make sure your resume is updated and you're ready to take notes!)

2.26.23– Best Article on ELMS

3.5.23– Journal #2 and Best Article on ELMS

3.12.23– Best Article on ELMS

3.20.23 - 3.24.23 – **SPRING BREAK**

3.26.23– **Organizational Profile completed and submitted on ELMS**

3.29.23– **CLASS #2** – In-depth questions; organizational profile debrief; review resume tips and discuss cover letters; professional self-marketing

4.2.23– Best Article on ELMS

4.9.23– Journal #3 and Best Article on ELMS

4.16.23– Best Article on ELMS

4.23.23– Journal #4 and Best Article on ELMS

4.26.23– **CLASS #3** – Evals, In-depth questions; networking (read Networking Articles on ELMS under Files); negotiating and knowing your value

4.30.23– Research Paper completed and submitted on ELMS

5.7.23– Internship Reflection / Career Report & Internship Evaluation completed and submitted on ELMS

## Bi-Weekly Journal Prompts

### JOURNAL #1

First, include a copy of your current resume.

This resource might be helpful as you prune and perfect your resume:

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/06/26/most-impressive-resume-ever-based-on-20-years-of-hiring-and-interviewing.html>

Second, \*\*\*Read\*\*\* the internship article selections on ELMS and react – which tips do you find potentially helpful or already useful?

Finally, write a few paragraphs detailing the following information:

- 1) Details of your internship office - what it does, what you're hoping to do, why you wanted to be there, etc.
- 2) Who is there? Who did you meet or meet with? Who is most exciting to get to know and learn from?
- 3) What are the office's dynamics? Is it loud and busy? Does the personnel get along really well and socialize? Etc.
- 4) What did you do this week? Will you need to keep any eye out for things to do or will you be kept busy at this placement?
- 5) What do you want to get from this experience? Try to name **three** goals, or professional skills, that you want to improve or gain during this semester's internship.
- 6) What is your supervisor's name and email address?

### JOURNAL #2

First, a basic update on the week's activities.

Second, consider one or two people you've met through your internship who might have some useful feedback about your resume. It's up to you if you follow through with asking them, but I'd like you to reflect on who those people might be, and why they would be good choices. Note that this can also slyly double as a reminder to those in your office (i.e., your supervisor) of your interests and background. Perhaps after these first few weeks of getting used to the routine of your office, it will allow them to refocus your assignments on things of more substance that you enjoy. But also remember you can do that in conversation.

Finally, in preparation for your upcoming organizational profile assignment, I want you to think about offices or jobs or career paths which are DIFFERENT than your current internship placement, and which you're interested in, or interested in learning more about. Try to come up with **two** different organizations or livelihoods that you're curious about, and tell me why. Also, I'd like for you to **identify, by name, one individual at each organization** (or with that career) which you could reach out to for an informational interview. If you know someone who knows

someone (like, your supervisor helps you identify some place you might have interest in working with because they know a person there and connect you), you might start with thinking about the individual. Otherwise, you might start thinking/brainstorming about what organizations are interesting to you, then drill down to find a person there to reach out to.

ADVICE: Both of these paths are entirely valid and useful. But, since the second scenario would involve a sort of cold email introduction, let me speak to that a bit more. As weird as it may feel for you, this is a quite common practice - to email people you've never met just to try to connect. That said, of course (of course), some people are jerks and won't be receptive or won't respond. Don't take this personally, it's their loss.

*In a cold email itself, here's what you want to accomplish:*

- 1) Keep it brief - they don't know you, they ain't gonna read some long rambly thing you write....at least not yet ;)
- 2) Introduce yourself and quickly state why you're getting in touch - My name is Candace Turitto. I'm a student at UMD and am completing an internship with Rep. Steny Hoyer this semester. I've also become really interested in Organization XYZ and what you do in the field of AB and C. I'm wondering if you may have any time to have coffee or a quick meeting so I might learn more about the organization's work? I'd also love any advice you have on how I can best set myself up for a possible career in this field after my graduation. Etc. Etc.
- 3) Be flexible - if they shoot back with another staff member to meet instead, take it and thank them profusely. If they can only meet you if you come to them, try your best to make that happen. It's not severe, but technically you're putting them out (asking them to do "work"), so try to make it as easy and agreeable as possible for them. That's not to say you should violate other commitments, but at a certain point, YOU bend backwards, not them.
- 4) When you set up a time, confirm it the day before. And thank them formally after it. This is hugely important.

*In my experience, there are some people who are just too busy (you likely won't have luck with, say, a Senator's Chief of Staff, if you don't already know them, or know someone who does). But for the most part, people in this town love talking about themselves, and talking with authority, so in many cases, they'll be inclined to meet with you unless it's really, really difficult. So don't be scared, proofread your email before you send it, and keep it short and real. Worst case scenario, #thankUnext.*

### **JOURNAL #3**

First, a basic update on the week's activities.

Second, I'd like you to redouble your efforts - think of the goals you set for yourself coming into your internship and give yourself an honest evaluation of the progress to those goals so far. Consider if you need to set new, more challenging goals. Or new, more realistic goals. When you finish this semester, you're going to look back on it as something that went by so quickly - so take this week to slow down, remember what you wanted out of this experience, and make sure you're going to get it. What tangible things do you need to focus on in order to achieve the goals you've set for the remainder of the semester?

Finally, let's start thinking about content for a cover letter, which you'll be able to largely modify as you apply for jobs in the future (instead of writing it anew). First, you'll just do an outline, or a



list of things which apply. There are four main sections – this week, concentrate on the middle to, since that’s the real meat.

*Introduction – we’ll save this for later...*

**\*School/Overall/Recent Experience** – things you did in HS and college other than classes (clubs, awards, sports, jobs, etc.)

**\*Major/Most Relevant Experience** – Your internship(s) probably. However, you might find yourself tailoring this paragraph to the job you’re applying for; maybe you switch the internships you mention, or switch them with some other job that’s more closely related to the open position, and mention your internships in the second paragraph instead. Just be open to editing each cover letter for the specific positions it’s for.

*Closing paragraph – we’ll save this for later*

## **JOURNAL #4**

First, a basic update on the week’s activities.

Second, what **three goals** would you like to set for yourself moving forward? These goals can be professionally-oriented or personal. Think about who you were when you began this experience, and reflect on who you are now. Then aim further and discuss what areas of growth you recognize for yourself in your near future. What skills would you like to learn or develop? What is your plan for achieving those goals?

Finally, write out a draft of your full cover letter. Here’s a snarky guideline (don’t be snarky in yours):

**Introduction** - Hi, I'm me. You have my resume, let me tell you more. I'm from MD. I went to school. Now I'm looking for a job and this \_\_\_\_\_ position looks dope, I want in.

*[You can leave the blank blank. It will change for each job anyway, and we're just building a template for that occasion. One very short paragraph. Keep it succinct.]*

**School/Overall/Recent Experience** - This is some of the stuff I did in school. I was in clubs and junk, got invited to all the best parties. I won awards. I had a job and got killer grades anyway. I also volunteer a bunch, and was a superstar high school person. I picked up so many clutch skills. Like, I'm the best leader ever. You can tell cuz of that one time I \_\_\_\_\_ and that other time I \_\_\_\_\_!

*[Use these blanks for really outstanding achievements. Whether they are related to the job’s field or not, you should think about what personal or professional skills that experience provided you and briefly explain that gain, as well as why it makes you an attractive candidate for hire.]*

**Major/Most Relevant Experience** - Most notably, while I was in college I had these internships. I slayed them. Here’s why. And man, I learned a lot about some stuff, like these things...\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

*[Same guidance as above, think about what personality traits they might be seeking, and mention experiences that connect.]*

**Why I want this job:** It's pretty clear this job is made for me, we know this. You need me. And I know I'm gonna be awesome at this. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

x