

WASHINGTON SEMESTER LEADERSHIP THROUGH POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

Overview

The School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA) Washington Semester Leadership through Policy and Governance is an 11-week immersion program for Virginia Tech undergraduates based at VT's Alexandria Center in Old Town Alexandria, VA. While this is not a policy program, it does seek to teach fellows to recognize the role policy has-through the presence/absence of governance, authority and collaboration-in decision making, no matter the field of work. To that end, fellows learn about and work on challenging public policy issues that shape cities locally and globally while earning credit. The program's location in the National Capital Region (NCR) exposes fellows to governance, authority and collaboration in decision making and provides opportunities to hear from leaders and experts working in public, private and non-profit organizations. As a means of synthesizing what they're learning and their experiences, each fellow maintains a journal of weekly entries. The journal is purposed to provide a tool for fellows to track their grasp of policy through governance, authority and collaboration and its subsequent impact on the plans, programs, procedures they may be working on. Fellows are asked to raise questions resulting from their work, class, field study and professional development experiences and seek to answer them over the course of the program. Additionally, fellows learn to navigate the NCR by using the Metro Rail system to travel to their work and field study locations. All fellows are placed in non-paid internships and participate in professional development sessions in the evenings. Other program offerings are based on the credit options.

The Washington Semester P & G program options:

12-Credit Program Requirements: Fellows work Monday-Thursday in a 30-hour week internship in a public, private or non-profit organization. Friday morning is the policy class and Friday afternoon is the field study. Professional Development sessions, including training in career preparation and lectures

with experts in various employment sectors, are held on Tuesday or Thursday evenings at the Alexandria campus.

Credit and grading breakdown for the 12-credit option:

Internship: 6 credits, 50% of grade (including journal)

Policy Seminar: 3 credits, 25% of grade (including final project)

Field Study: 3 credits, 25% of grade (including professional development)

Honors Credit

Additionally, the 12-credit program has an honors component for fellows in the Honors College. In addition to the above requirements, honors fellows can receive honors credit by completing the following capstone project:

Fellows may earn honors credit through the completion of a policy research project developed in consultation with course instructors and internship colleagues. Topic and format are flexible. Fellows may complete a 10-page paper reviewing research relevant to a policy problem (for example, “Too much traffic” or “Too much lead in drinking water”); evaluate a policy proposal (for example, “What if we raise the speed limit to 100?”); or unpack a policy indicator (for example, “How many people live in poverty? How is poverty measured?”). Students may also propose alternative formats, such as developing two op-ed articles addressing policy problems or issues in current debate. Below are the three requirements. Due dates will be assigned at the beginning of the program.

- One page proposal
- Outline and list of sources
- Final paper

6-Credit Program Requirements: Fellows work Monday-Thursday in a 30-hour week internship in a public, private or non-profit organization. They participate in the Congressional field study. Professional Development sessions, including training in career preparation and lectures with experts in various employment sectors, are held Tuesday or Thursday evenings at the Alexandria campus.

Credit breakdown for 6-credit option:

Internship: 6 credits, 50% of grade (including journal); professional development, 20%, final project, 30%

Washington Semester P & G Program Components

Internship

After payment of the \$100 program fee, thereby confirming participation in the program, fellows will begin working with the WS Internship Coordinator to initiate the internship placement process. Using the employment preference information from the fellow's application, the Internship Coordinator and fellow will discuss possible work locations to pursue. Once identified, the Internship Coordinator will make contact with the employer to share the fellow's resume. If interest is confirmed, the fellow will be directed to contact the employer to schedule an interview, which could be telephone and/or Skype. It is important for the fellow to maintain constant communication with the Internship Coordinator during this process. Once the fellow has been accepted by the employer, the Internship Coordinator will work with the employer to complete all necessary documents for the employer's participation. Part of this documentation is a job description for the work that the fellow will be responsible for. Before the internship begins, both the fellow and employer sign off on the work to ensure there is agreement and mutual understanding of the work expectations. This agreement is kept on file for the duration of the internship. Simultaneously, the fellow should work with the employer to learn any employment details, such as completing background checks, badge requirements, etc, and follow instructions accordingly. This will make the start of your internship much smoother. To ensure a positive work experience, the Internship Coordinator conducts a mid-point employer evaluation to learn how the fellow is performing and to identify any areas of improvement that may be needed. This evaluation is then discussed with the fellow in their mid-point evaluation. A final evaluation employer evaluation is also conducted to obtain an overall assessment of the fellow and their work. This is also discussed with the fellow. Both employer evaluations are used as part of the internship grade. The journal completes the grade.

Important Notes on Internships: Fellows are reminded that internships are non-paid and any compensation is strictly prohibited and violates university policy. Additionally, fellows must consult with the Internship Coordinator **before** modifying or ending an internship. Violation of these policies will result in disciplinary actions up to and including termination from the program.

Policy Seminar

Seminar participants will reflect on how the presentation of policy evidence shapes how policymakers and the public interpret and respond to problems of everyday governance. It seeks to provide fellows the skills to recognize governance structures in their internships and other organizations and how to policy evidence to insert themselves into discussions that affect them. Coursework is reading and writing intensive. The Policy Seminar is held Friday, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm.

→ **Section 1 - Constructing Evidence in Policy Debate** explores the process of creating, communicating, and consuming quantitative and visual evidence in policy debate.

→ **Section 2 – Urban Governance** explores debate over a specific policy issue as a case study of urban governance.

Grading

Evaluation of coursework in the policy seminar will be based on five course elements – each constituting 20 percent of the final course grade:

1. **Memo #1** (500-750 words)

2. **Memo #2** (500-750 words)

Written work will be evaluated using four equally-weighted criteria:

→ Assignment – Does it respond to the question or assignment?

→ Analysis – Does it present a clear thesis or narrative? Are its conclusions supported?

→ Grounding – Does it make effective use of course materials to establish firm theoretical and conceptual grounding?"

→ Readability – Is it concise and well-organized? Is the language clear? Is it free of egregious typos, grammatical errors, and other distractions?

3. **Policy Briefings** -

Policy Briefings will be evaluated using four equally-weighted criteria:

→ Assignment - Does the presentation respond to the assignment?

→ Analysis - Are elements of the presentation organized around a coherent thesis or narrative? Are problems and concepts clearly defined? Is the presentation informative? Is it interesting?

→ Grounding - Does the presentation make effective use of available policy evidence? Is policy evidence accurately described, clearly cited, and critically analyzed?

→ Presentation - Do oral and visual aspects of the presentation contribute to its clarity and effectiveness. Is the presentation free of common stylistic distractions?

For Honors Credit:

Submission of the following using the weighted criteria cited above.

→ One page proposal of project

→ Outline and list of sources

→ Final paper

Field Study

The Field Study seeks to expand the experiential learning beyond the internship. On selected Friday afternoons, fellows will travel to sites that demonstrate the intersection of policy, governance and

collaboration. Sites are chosen based on their topical influence in policy, depth of expertise in a policy area, whether it is a timely policy matter and to support the identified case study. Fellows will engage with experts working on real-world issues and are encouraged to dialogue with them as a means of broadening their understanding and grasp of their place in the policy discourse and impact. Field Study is usually 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm on Fridays, but may be shorter/longer depending on site and location.

Grading will be based on fellow attendance and engagement in Field Study and professional development sessions.

Professional Development

One of the tenets of the Washington Semester is providing fellows with tools, information and knowledge that can advance their studies and careers. To that end, the program brings in experts to engage with fellows in a number of areas, including career development, where fellows discuss and practice resume building, networking and interviewing. Additionally, experts in areas such as policy, intelligence/security, health, cybersecurity, economics, law, architecture, planning and environment are brought in to engage with fellows about these industries. Participants are encouraged to use this time to ask questions and explore the field being discussed through the experiences of the expert.

Travel Requirements

Most fellows will use the Metro train and bus system to travel to their internships, field study and professional development sessions. It is important for fellows to familiarize themselves with the Metro network to help determine travel times based on their housing location. Travel times are not an exemption from program requirements. Please visit www.wmata.com to learn about the network.

Housing

Many Washington Semester fellows reside in The Gallery, the Virginia Tech apartment complex located in Old Town Alexandria, adjacent to the Alexandria campus. Residence in this facility is managed by Virginia Tech Residence Life and follows the same conduct policies as Blacksburg residence halls. Housing is provided on a first-come, first-served basis. Information on room set-up, sizes and fees can be found [here](#).

Accommodation

Reasonable accommodations are available to fellows with a disability. Please contact the Services for Students with a Disability Office at www.ssd.vt.edu or via e-mail at ssd@vt.edu. They can be reached at (540) 231-3788 Voice / (540) 231-0853 TTY / (540) 231-3232 fax.

Honor Code

The Virginia Tech Honor Code applies to all student assignments. Student participation in seminar events requires careful preparation each week, sometimes in collaboration with other students. We encourage

this mutual collaboration since we hope that you will learn from each other as well as from professional peers in your internship offices. But all written submissions must be original and conform to all Virginia Tech Honor Code requirements.

Tuition rates for summer 2017 can be found [here](#).

For program contacts and additional information, please visit our website at www.spia.vt.edu/ws.