

PLSC 391 – Seminar in Washington, D.C.
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Course Objectives

The goal of this course, which will be conducted primarily on Fridays during your stay in Washington, is to learn how public policy is shaped. You will have the unique opportunity to listen to first-hand accounts from government and non-government officials who participate in the policy-making process, formally and informally. After this experience you will better understand the political process and hopefully be motivated to actively participate in your community, state and even at the national level in the political process of policy making.

Each Friday we will have three sessions (as a general rule)—one with the instructor and two with political practitioners—either at the Barlow Center or on location at the office or agency of the person offering the briefing. To prepare for these briefings, we will ask the following key questions:

- Who shapes public opinion/policy and how?
- How do activists wield influence?
- How are successful campaigns run?
- How do policy makers respond to activists and lobbyists?

In order to make the most of these opportunities, you will prepare carefully for each briefing and think critically about the experience after the fact.

Participation is worth ten percent of the course grade. Absences will result in a reduction of the participation grade. Only absences due to illness or work required by your supervisor are excused. The following are not excused absences: job interviews, family events (including visits from parents, but they can join us for the briefings), excursions or out-of-town trips, and alternative briefing opportunities. You should not schedule anything before 4 pm on Fridays.

Assignments & Deadlines

Assignments are due on Friday morning at the beginning of the meetings. All deadlines are firm and non-negotiable. Grades will be reduced 10% for each day an assignment is late. Arrange your schedule to meet these deadlines.

Pre-briefing Papers

To prepare for the briefings do the readings assigned and after completing the assigned reading, draft a 200-300 word “reading reflection.” Don’t just summarize each reading. Your reflection should consider the general topic of the assigned readings together and

consider the following questions: What was the author's main point? What examples best illustrate this point? Are there counter-examples that might challenge the argument?

For each briefing you are required to Google the name of the individual we will be meeting and note one interesting fact about the person. A single sentence will suffice. These pre-briefing papers will be graded pass-fail and are worth twenty percent of your final grade.

Analytical Papers

You will write three short (4-5 pages) papers over the course of the semester. Each paper will be worth 20% of the final grade (60% all together). The papers are due according to the following schedule: First paper due September 21, Second paper due November 16, Third paper due December 14.

The topics for each paper are:

First paper: "The Founders and Contemporary Government"

Considering the history you have been exposed to during our trip to Philadelphia (and that provided by the speakers), compare and contrast the federal government's size and powers with what the Founders apparently imagined when drafting the Constitution. Use material from the Constitution Center, the Independence Hall tour, and the presentations at the Freedoms Foundation (as well as other speakers) to form your image of the Founders' state of mind in 1789. Then compare this original intent to current practice as you know it. You should focus on a few elements in your treatment (separation of powers, representation, suffrage, civil rights, federalism, checks and balances, etc.). Outside research is not necessary to complete this assignment.

Second paper: Exerting Pressure on the Government

Reflecting upon the briefings to date, answer the question: Why are some more effective at influencing government than others? You should look particularly at the efforts of non-governmental workers (lobbyists, activists, journalists, etc.) that we've heard from and accounts provided by government officials. Begin by assessing their relative effectiveness at getting the government (bureaucracy, legislature, courts) to do something (or to stop doing something). Once you've made this determination, identify three or four factors that increase the odds of being influential in Washington. You can illustrate your analysis with examples.

Third paper: Political Participation and My Career Choices

One of the purposes of the briefings (and your internship) is to expose you to a wide array of careers in politics in the hope that this will influence your own personal career selection. Being active in politics requires being devoted to changing policy and this impacts family time, salary, job security and social status. Consider what matters most to you in a career (Salary? Social status? Job security? Family time? Intellectual challenge? Making a difference?) and compare this to the career choices made by the people

encountered during briefings. In the final analysis, decide whether you would enjoy the life of a political activist.

Two Short Assignments

Due after we complete the project, a short paper (2 page limit) on the *Service Learning Experience*. Relate the experience to your own life and to what you are learning about government. This is also graded pass-fail and worth 5% of your grade.

Due no later than December 7 (but can be completed well before that) a short report (2 page limit) on your *Enrichment Activity*. Your *Enrichment Activity* will consist of a self-directed tour or briefing of one or several of the many museums, monuments, or libraries available free of charge around Washington, D.C. Simply recount what you learned. This is graded pass-fail and worth 5% of your grade.

Grade Breakdown

Participation: 10%
Reading reflections: 20%
4-5-page papers: (20% each) 60%
Enrichment Activity report: 5%
Service Learning Activity report: 5%

Concluding Comments

One of the goals of the Washington Seminar experience is to socialize students in a professional environment. Each day you will be interacting with individuals who have made Washington their homes and who have invested their futures in their careers and reputations. In government and politics, one's status is closely tied to one's professionalism.

As an intern, your own conduct will reflect well or poorly on your office, your supervisor and BYU. The stakes are high—much higher than when you are simply taking a class in Provo. Your conduct should be different. If it is not, your grade in this course will reflect your lack of professionalism.

Code of Conduct for Briefings:

Always *arrive early* (at least five minutes or more if required) for a briefing. Arriving late is discourteous to our speaker and therefore cannot be tolerated as it reflects poorly on BYU generally. If you are even one minute late you can expect to be denied entry—especially if we are visiting someone at an office that requires a security check.

Always dress appropriately. Men should wear a tie and women appropriate professional attire. Slouching or dozing off during briefings will simply make you look foolish.

Always know something about the speaker and the topic. The Google requirement mentioned above is a bare minimum. The assigned readings are to help you develop some basic knowledge of the issue to be addressed. Try checking the speaker's website as well. Come prepared with a question or two. You can ask challenging questions, but be respectful and courteous.

If you fail to abide by all of these guidelines, your participation score will be reduced.

Briefings & Readings Schedule

Over the course of the semester, you will be privileged to hear from a wide range of Washington experts drawn from a variety of occupations. As speakers agree to come, I will provide background readings most suited to helping you prepare to participate in a discussion with the speaker. In some cases these will come from Barry Rubin, *A Citizen's Guide to Politics in America*. We will read several chapters from Grant Reeher & Mack Mariani, *The Insider's Guide to Political Internships* in the first few weeks of the semester.

This Schedule Will be Regularly Updated as Briefings are Scheduled

January 7 First Meeting with all program participants, 8:45-5:00 p.m. @ Barlow Center.

January 11 Group Meeting, 8:45; Briefing by Lou Hampton, 9:30-12:30 @ Barlow Center.

January 18 8:45 Group Meeting, "Effective Interning," read Reeher & Mariani, chs. 1, 2 & 5;

January 25 8:45 Group Meeting, "Effective Interning," read Reeher & Mariani, chs. 3 & 4.

February 8-9 Philadelphia Excursion, depart Barlow Center early A.M. Friday, return early evening on Saturday.

February 15 First Paper Due;

March 7 Second Paper Due;

March 29 (Saturday) Gettysburg Excursion, depart Barlow Center early A.M.

April 18 Final Meeting and Apartment Inspection. **Final Paper Due, Turn in Internship Evaluation**

April 19 Students Vacate Barlow Center