



THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK

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SPEAKER

Assembly Intern Committee

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**New York State Assembly Intern Program
Legislative Analysis and Work Products Practicum: Spring 2023**

General Practicum Information

Supervising Professor	Janet Penksa, PhD Professor-In-Residence NYS Assembly Intern Office Graduate Scholars Program
Regular Date/Time	Every Friday, 60 minutes
Location/Pod Leader	TBD

Practicum Description

Inspired by a course on communicating public policy developed and taught by Catherine F. Smith at Syracuse University, the practicum is designed to complement the undergraduate course POLITICS AND POLICY IN THE NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS by putting into practice the political and policy theories governing legislative and democratic processes. This practicum will run continuously throughout the program.

The practicum will familiarize Interns with the practices of public policy-making as experienced in a legislative office, and prepare students to participate in the policy-making process through professional skills development and preparation of a professional portfolio of written work or documentation produced or used in legislative offices. Interns will review and ultimately produce some of the more common types, such as bill and sponsor memos, public hearing testimony and letters seeking to influence policy-making. All students will be asked to participate in and prepare materials for a “mock” public hearing to be conducted in February.

Interns will be divided into small groups, or *learning pods*, and be led by one of the Intern Program’s Graduate Scholars. The Scholars will work under the direction of the Program’s Professors and Director. Program Faculty and senior Assembly staff will facilitate professional development workshops preparing students to conduct legislative analysis such as research skills development in the legislative context and budget analysis.

Interns will be expected to write professional works to form a portfolio that may be used post-internship to demonstrate their legislative writing skills to prospective employers or graduate programs. These will be related to the work of their assigned offices and students are advised to coordinate with their office supervisors to plan the subject and type of written work.

Interns will present and review their work with one another and with their Graduate Scholar “Pod Leader.” Graduate Interns will be asked to develop a *work plan* for their *pod*. A menu of possible work will be provided and students will select the types they wish to complete based on their individual interests and usefulness to their office assignment. Students will work in close consultation with their office supervisors in developing this work plan. In addition to planning out the type of work to be completed, a schedule for completion will be developed. Graduate Scholar Pod Leaders will work with the students and the Intern Office to ensure the work plan meets all program requirements and the timetable for assignment completion does not conflict with the coursework for POLITICS AND POLICY IN THE NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS. As part of the work plan, adequate time will be built in for peer review with other pod members, the Graduate Scholar Pod Leader and office supervisors. Upon completion of each work product, the Graduate Scholar Pod Leaders, in consultation with program Professors, will review and issue grades for this work.

Each pod will schedule a weekly group meeting to plan and review work plans. In addition, all Interns will be expected to attend all Practicum workshop training sessions, Issue Forums, and Weekly Preview sessions organized by the Intern Office to supplement the Intern’s office work so that Interns will more fully experience the legislature.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the Practicum, each student will have:

- Gained an understanding of how democratic and political theory taught in the classroom translates to the actual practice of policy making and legislative action;
- Demonstrated an understanding of the major work or documents expected of a professional legislative staffer and the ability to prepare these work products;
- Experienced all aspects of public discourse and policy-making in the legislature;
- Developed a strategic approach to, and experience in, developing and communicating policy positions in the legislature by simulating legislative discourse;
- Demonstrated the practical skills required in a legislative office and applicable to research and communication in other policy settings, such as interest groups and other governmental entities.

Professional and Skills Development Workshops:

Periodically, Interns may be invited to attend workshops led by Intern Office staff and Professors-in-Residence or legislative subject matter experts, covering a variety of topics to develop students’ research and analytical skills identified as core to preparation for participation in the legislative process. Topics may include:

- Legislative Research: LRS and other documentation and resources
- How to Track Legislative History
- Legislative Bill Drafting: Taking policy ideas into print
- So You Want to Be a Member: Assembly floor procedure and debate
- The Governor’s 2022 State of the State & Budget Presentation
- The NYS Budget: How to read and understand the financial plan, appropriations & other budget materials
- Advocacy & Lobbying: Making your case
- The Federal-State-Local Relationship/Municipal Home Rule and Local Governance
- The Tree That Doesn’t Bend Breaks: The Negotiation Process

Weekly Previews:

Each Monday morning at 9:30 am, Interns will be required to watch, through Zoom, a 30 to 40 minute discussion regarding the upcoming week’s Assembly activities and events. The history and significance of these will be discussed in the context of New York State Politics. These sessions will be led by one or more of the Professors or Graduate Scholars and Interns will have the opportunity to participate via video or chat box (in Zoom).

Issue Forums:

Periodically, Interns will be required to attend Issue Forums scheduled by the Intern Office. These will be on Zoom or in person, 60 to 90 minute events led by prominent public officials or subject matter experts in New York State Government. Interns will have the opportunity to participate in the conversation and ask questions.

Assignments and Student Learning Pods

Interns will produce a body of written legislative “work products” throughout the course of this practicum. These are the documents typically found in a legislative office. They are prepared by actors both in and outside the legislature, with the common denominator of seeking to inform or influence policy and/or legislative action. These form the everyday material and documentation by which institutional democracy is conducted.

For example, professional legislative staff prepare bill and sponsor memos that describe the contents and impact of legislation under consideration, providing critical information and justification as legislation is deliberated and debated. Non-profit agencies and interest groups may prepare memorandums of support or opposition to express their opinion and position on the same legislation under consideration. These are important to the public discourse that occurs as part of legislative deliberation and form the written record available to the public during deliberation, as well as providing the documentation forming the legislative history after legislative action occurs.

The style of writing required for this documentation differs from what is customary in academic work in that it is concise, clearly written, highly targeted to the topic under consideration and promotes action. Strategic thinking, critical analysis and an understanding of the political context are fundamental to this style, as the writer is essentially “making a case” in as concise a manner as possible. The legislature is a fast-paced environment, with thousands of pieces of legislation considered each session. Demonstrating the ability to produce this style of documentation in this environment is highly sought by those within and outside of the Capitol.

At the end of the semester, students will submit a “professional portfolio” for grading by the program Faculty. Post Internship, students may use the contents of the portfolio as writing samples for future endeavors. Throughout the semester and the production of this work, the Graduate Scholar Pod Leaders will meet with Session Interns, review and initially grade their work, and promote a learning environment where students will peer review each other’s work within their learning pod.

Graduate Scholar Pod Leaders will begin the planning process with each student learning pod at the beginning of the Internship. Students will receive a survey during orientation for the Internship where they will be able to express their individual policy and future career interests. Based on these results, the Intern Committee will form approximately 10 student learning pods, each under the direction of a Graduate Scholar matched to student interests. These will be diverse learning pods in terms of career interests so that students experience a full range of interests and stakeholders in the legislative process and, concurrently, have the ability to work on a wide range of legislative work products, either as a producer or reviewer of the myriad of written work common in the legislative environment.

Office-Based Written Work Products

At the beginning of the Internship, Session Interns will be asked to work with their office supervisors and their Graduate Scholar Pod Leaders to produce three pieces of legislative work.

Because there are so many types of documentation that form the basis of legislative deliberation and the legislative history, and because each student enters this program with different areas of academic and professional interest, Interns will be able to select from menu options. For example, a student interested in a law may want to try their hand at drafting model legislation. A student interested in journalism may want to write a short article or an op-ed piece as one of their work products. These are just examples.

At the beginning of the Internship, students will meet as a group with their Graduate Scholar Pod Leader who will have examples of each type of legislative work product from which the student may select and begin to “map out” the contents of their professional portfolio. This will be done in consultation with their office supervisor in hopes the Interns and Supervisor will be able to plan work products that will be of actual use in their legislative office.

Some of the work produced in students’ legislative offices may not be public information and may be considered personal and confidential. **Use of materials in or prepared by students in their legislative offices are confidential unless their use is explicitly authorized by their office supervisor.**

“Mock” Legislative Public Hearing

Interns will simulate one of the legislature’s most important deliberative exercises, the public hearing, where interest groups and other stakeholders are invited to testify before a legislative committee. Committee members seek written and oral testimony to better inform their decision making, with ample opportunity to hear from and question stakeholders from all sides of an issue. Truly deliberative democracy in action!

The work produced by Interns will supplement the work produced for the professional portfolio above (which will be office based and supported) and may be used as part of each Intern’s portfolio as team produced writing samples. These will include public hearing testimony, briefing memos, and talking points/questions for members to ask during the hearing. Under the direction of each Graduate Scholar Pod Leader, student learning pods will have the ability to design their approach to participation in the hearing, including role playing. The Intern Office will provide further instruction, guidance, coordination and support throughout.

“Mock” Committees and Legislative Session

An essential element of the legislative process is navigating and shepherding legislation through committee and ultimate passage by the full legislature. This includes having a comprehensive understanding of bills under consideration and debate, being able to articulate the importance of passing a given piece of legislation, answering difficult questions, and generally being a strong advocate with good communication and debating skills.

In this spirit, at the end of the Intern program, Interns will participate in a "Mock Committee and Legislative Session" to simulate the committee process that will culminate in a "Mock" Legislative Session in the Assembly Chamber in the Capitol, where students will debate and vote on legislation selected through a student-driven legislative committee process.

Resources:

Materials to inform and support student completion of Practicum requirements will be provided by the Intern Office over the course of the Internship. A recommended resource for students interested in deepening their writing and communication skills in public policy is as follows:

Smith, C., & Pasqualoni, M. (2019). *Writing public policy: A practical guide to communicating in the policy making process.* In *Writing Public Policy: A Practical Guide to Communicating in the Policy Making Process.* Oxford University Press.

In addition, students are asked to read and refer to the Assembly’s own internal publication, *The Assembly Intern Office's Guide to the New York State Legislature*, updated annually and made available on-line.

Students are also expected to read newspapers to keep abreast of current issues. Daily media recommended are the *Albany Times Union* and the state sections of other publications, for example, the *New York Times*, the *New York Post*, the *New York Daily News*, and regional newspapers, such as *The Buffalo News*. Web publications are plentiful. *Governing Magazine*, *City and State* and *the Empire Page* are highly recommended. In addition, viewing *Inside Albany* at 8pm weeknights on TWC is beneficial and valuable for keeping up to date on state issues and activities.

Academic Honesty

Students are required to adhere to the academic creed of their university and will maintain the highest standards of academic integrity.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The Assembly is committed to full inclusion for all persons to its educational program and services. Please inform the Intern Office of any special accommodations that may be required.

Other Course Policies

Attendance: On-time attendance at all sessions is a mandatory component of each student's Internship. If an Intern is unexpectedly confronted with scheduling or any other kind of issue, an excuse from the pod meeting must be obtained by calling or emailing the Intern Office or their Pod Leader stating the reason for the absence.

Late Assignments: Late assignments are not accepted without prior approval and with cause, such as medical emergencies. A penalty will be assessed on all late assignments.

Etiquette: Arrive on time and conduct yourself in a professional and courteous manner. Should a remote session be scheduled, Interns are expected to appear "in-person" at all mandatory sessions with cameras on. The benefit of video conferencing is lost if Interns do not appear in person by turning their cameras off. As we are simulating professional environment, students should refrain from appearing in a setting or manner unbecoming of a professional workplace. Make every effort to conduct yourself as if you were in person in a classroom or legislative office.

Written Assignments: **It will be imperative that all written communications be grammatically correct and typo-free. Non-adherence to this policy will affect a student's evaluation.** Length and explicit directions for assignments will be discussed in each Graduate Scholar-led student pod.

Evaluation

Evaluation of Intern performance by the program Professors will be dependent on evaluation of student attendance, participation, and work products by the Graduate Scholar leading the Intern's practicum pod.

Copyright & Use of Materials

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