POLS 393: Political Science Career Development Workshop
Fall 2014
Fridays 2-3:30
DuSable 252

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Office Hours: Monday, 1:30-2:30; Tuesday, 3:00-5:00 or by appointment

Course Description

Exploration of career options for political science majors. This one-credit course will assist students with the identification of career paths, the development of skills (e.g., resume creation, interviewing techniques, adopting professional attitudes and behavior), and provide coaching on resume-building and engaging in co- and extra-curricular activities while pursuing the major. PRQ: political science major and sophomore or junior standing.

Course Format

This course consists of five class sessions, and a “Career Shadow Day.” The five class sessions will be a combination of skill-building workshops and presentations from a variety of professionals and recent graduates who will share their expertise and experience. For Shadow Day, students are paired with a mentor at a mentor’s workplace where they will have the opportunity to have a hands-on experience in a career they would like to pursue. Every effort will be made to place students in a work environment that is as closely related to their career aspirations as possible. This Shadow Day will provide opportunities to observe and absorb information, and will also include a mock interview where the mentor or mentor’s colleagues will give students valuable feedback.

Assignments and Grading

This course is Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory. In order to achieve passing grade of “Satisfactory” the student must receive a “satisfactory” grade on ALL assignments and requirements for this course.

- **Attendance:** To receive a satisfactory grade for attendance, students must have no unexcused absences and must take part in a Shadow Day experience.
- **Participation:** To receive a satisfactory grade for participation, students must speak up and contribute meaningfully in every one of the five class periods.
- **Career Exploration Assignment:** This is a short paper (2-3 double-spaced pages) where students investigate at least one career option for political
science majors. This assignment is due **September 12** and will represent a meaningful effort on the part of the student, following the guidelines that will be provided.

- **Resume Assignment:** Students will create a resume to discuss for the relevant class, and then will revise this document in light of the class discussion and resubmit it. Students should bring a draft to the **September 12** class. The final resume is due on **October 10**.

- **Shadow Day Reflection:** Students will hand in a two-page double-spaced paper reflecting on their experience with Shadow Day on time. The paper is due **December 5** and will represent a meaningful effort on the part of the student, following the guidelines that will be provided. Please submit the paper to me via email.

- **Mentor evaluation** of Shadow Day performance will assess whether sufficient effort and professionalism were displayed by student.

All of these requirements must be fulfilled (1) on time and (2) according to the specifications provided for a student to achieve a passing grade in this course. If any one of these is missed, then the student will fail the course. Part of the point of this course is to encourage students to be responsible and perform all of the duties they take on in a timely fashion. No one, regardless of qualifications, will be successful in any work environment without exhibiting professional and conscientious behavior.

**Class Schedule**

**August 29: Being an engaged student**

Taking advantage of opportunities provided by POLS and the university at large. Focusing on the importance of being well-rounded in life and for the sake of building a compelling resume. Building social, communication, and leadership skills, as well as broadening one's horizons.

**September 12: Career Exploration and Résumé Writing**

We will discuss various kinds of careers, and work on how to summarize relevant facts about yourself in a résumé. **Students should bring with them a draft of their resume.**

Guest speaker: Cindy Henderson, Executive Director, NIU Career Services

**Career Exploration Assignment Due**

**October 10: Human Resources specialist**
Discussion of appropriate professional demeanor, communications, the importance of first impressions, and other important aspects of making a successful transition between university and career life.

Guest speaker: Roslyn Snell, Assistant Director for Outreach, NIU Human Resource Services

**Final resume due**

**October 17: Transitioning to graduate and law schools**

Discussion of best practices on applying to graduate and law schools.

Guests speakers: David Gaebler, Associate Dean, NIU College of Law
              Martin Claar, graduate student, NIU Department of Political Science

**October 31: Political Science Careers**

Several alumni of POLS program will discuss their experiences and offer their advice on entering the work force.