

# Sc 540/ Sc 541

## INTERNSHIP IN SOCIOLOGY I&II

John B. Williamson  
McGuinn 424  
617 552-8530

SPRING, 2007  
Wed 6:00-7:30 p.m.  
e-mail: jbw@bc.edu

**Office Hours:**  
**Wednesday 3:00-3:55 and 5:10-5:55**  
**Thursday 3:00-4:00**  
**or by appointment**

This course is primarily designed for students who wish to acquire practical work experience in a human service, political, social research, or social policy agency--private or governmental, profit or nonprofit. Some students find placements in consulting firms, law firms, or other business organizations. Some do research with a faculty member at BC, at another university, or in a social research organization in the area. In most cases these internships are unpaid, but in some cases they are paid positions. Undergraduates typically take this course in their junior or senior year as a way to find out more about what it is like to work in one of the many setting that sociology majors take jobs in after graduating from college. However, some sophomores do take it as well. While the course is not restricted to sociology students, non-majors should keep in mind that it is expected that sociological concepts and questions will inform the papers you write and discussion in class. To justify academic credit for this course written work and oral presentations will be called for in addition to the time spent and work done in connection with your actual internship placement.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

If you are a graduate student, the requirements differ. See page 6.

1. You have the option of doing either requirement 1A or 1B below, but you will not be a candidate for a grade of A for this component of the course without doing both and doing both well. For those who elect to do both, there will be some extra credit.
  - 1A. **Keep a journal** with entries on at least a weekly basis. This journal will primarily deal with your internship experience. It must be both descriptive and analytic. Your journal will be due on or before **Wednesday, May 9**. If your handwriting is very clear, there is no need to type it up. Be sure to include a

summary as the last entry in your journal describing what you got out of your internship experience including a discussion of what you learned about what you want or do not want in a job when you enter the workforce after finishing your education. Journal entries should average 300-400 words, but can be longer if you so elect and if plan not to write a term paper. See notes from first day of class for details about what to include. You have the option of turning in a draft of your journal at the fourth meeting of the class. If you do so, I will give you feedback on your journal. You are also welcome to come in to see me any time to show your journal to me during my office hours to get feedback on the spot.

- 1B. **Prepare a 3,000-4,000 word term paper** that in some way relates to your internship or an issue at least indirectly relevant to your internship placement. This paper is due **Wed., May 9** (by 4:00 p.m.; put it in my mailbox in McGuinn 426 or under my door McGuinn 424). You must come in to see me in my office to get your topic approved. It is best to spend some time making sure you can find as much material as you will need to write the paper before you come in. It must in some way be relevant to the topic of your internship. You can turn in a draft of the paper on or before **Wednesday, April 25**. If you do so, I will provide feedback on that draft on or before the last day of class.
2. You must attend class and participate actively in the class discussion. This will include reports from you about your own internship, questions you ask in connection with internship reports from other students, class discussion of questions you pose to the class linked in some way to your internship, and discussion of other career related topics that I will bring up from time to time as time permits related to such issues as what it is you are looking for in a job when you finish your education. We will meet as a group approximately once every other week for 90 minutes. I expect to see each of you at other times during the semester outside of class to privately discuss your internship. This will be important if something seems to be going wrong. It will be up to you to schedule these meetings and you can come in as often as you like.
3. You must spend the number of hours per week that you have agreed to work at your internship placement. I will leave it up to you and your supervisor to decide on the number of hours per week, but it must be at least 5 hours per week. You should realize that many internship placements will not agree to anything less than 8 or 10 hours per week and some will require even more hours to take you on. Sometimes you are given more interesting tasks when you give them more of your time. Be conservative about how much time you have for your placement so you will not feel under too much pressure as the semester progresses and you have many assignments due in other courses. Do not agree to more hours than you will be able to provide during the weeks at the end of the semester.
4. At your internship placement you must obtain a field supervisor. Turn in **Form B** signed by your field supervisor preferably on the first day of class or by our second class meeting at the latest. Your field supervisor will be responsible for

- overseeing your work at the internship site. This person must agree to submit a written evaluation of your work by **Wednesday, May 9**. This is to be a confidential letter to me. I strongly urge you to **hand deliver** that letter so you can be sure that I get it on time. If your supervisor wants to e-mail the letter to me that is fine, but it is up to you to make sure that letter has been sent to and received by me. If the letter is sent to me via e-mail, ask your supervisor to notify you when the letter has been sent. If it is to be faxed, please ask your supervisor to call to leave me voicemail message saying it has been sent so that I will check to see if the Fax was received. The letter should discuss what you did, how well you performed, and make suggestions for improvement. I discourage the use of U.S. Mail for this letter because it takes too long to get to me.
5. You must familiarize yourself with and abide by the official BC rules with respect to academic integrity. Please spend some time checking out the information at the following website: <http://www.bc.edu/integrity> . Any paper written for this course must be written by you, be original to this course, be done only for this course, and not be a revised version of a paper (or thesis) done for a different course.

### **COURSE GRADING:**

The grade for the course will be determined as follows:

60% on your written work (journal, term paper, or both)

20% on class participation and contribution

20% on your supervisor's letter and my assessment of your internship as a learning experience

### **PERSONAL SAFETY:**

It is very important that you discuss the issue of personal safety with me and with your field supervisor if there is any potential for personal safety problems given the location and/or time when you will be at your internship. I will want to know what steps you are taking to assure that personal safety will not be a problem for you. If at some point during your internship you become aware that there is a problem that you were not aware of at the outset, please discuss the issue with me.

## **FINDING A PLACEMENT:**

It is up to you to find your own placement. However, if you come in to see me I can give you suggestions about how to find a placement that fits your needs. If you go to the Boston College Career Center, they will also be able to give you a lot of help. The address of the BC Career Center is 38 Commonwealth Ave. You may want to call ahead to find out when best to come in for help in using their resources.

One way to find an internship is to look at the list of prior placements that can be found on the list provided on my personal website. Go first to <http://www2.bc.edu/~jbw> Then go to “Courses” and then go to Sc540/Sc541 Internship List. You can just print the list provided. However, a much better alternative may be to use the database that is available through the Career Center. I would suggest that you start by spending some time on their excellent website and the database of internships available through their website. Then, I would suggest that you visit them for advice about anything related to internships, but specifically about how to go about getting accepted into an internship that will meet your needs. For example, I would not suggest that you just send out your resume to 20 agencies and wait from them to call you. Why? Because many are so busy that they will never get back to you.

**HOW TO FIND AND USE THE WEB BASED LISTING OF INTERSHIPS MAINTAINED BY THE BOSTON COLLEGE CAREER CENTER** (Please keep in mind that these instructions tell you what to do as of the day I have prepared this comment. Unfortunately, the Career Center does not notify me when they make changes in their website so it is entirely possible that the instructions will change in some way by the time you read this note. But even if that is the case, I would guess that what I say here will help you get what you need. )

1. Start by going to the BC Info Page
2. On the right you will find a Quick Links drop down menu. Select Career Center and then hit the Go button
3. This will bring you to the main webpage for the Boston College Career Center.
4. On the top right is another Quick Links drop down menu. Use it to select internships. This will bring you to a page called Internships
5. Select the first item on this list called How to Find an Internship. You will find a lot of useful information on this page. If you click on Eaglelink you will be in the main source of internship listings for Boston College students. After you find some internships that look like they might be of interest to you, I think it would be a good idea to go to the Career Center to talk to a member of their staff about what approach to take, how to present yourself, etc. to actually land the internship that you want.

**THERE IS A SECOND MAJOR SOURCE OF POTENTIAL AGENCIES THAT YOU MAY WANT TO CONTACT. THIS IS THE DATABASE MAINTAINED BY THE BOSTON COLLEGE VOLUNTEER SERVICE LEARNING CENTER.**

THE FOLLOWING ARE INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO USE THE WEB RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM THE BOSTON COLLEGE VOLUNTEER SERVICE LEARNING CENTER:

1. START BY GOING TO [www.bc.edu/service](http://www.bc.edu/service) This will bring you to the home page for the Boston College Volunteer Service and Learning Center. On the right hand side of the page you will see something called Volunteering Opportunities
2. That will bring you to a page titled Volunteering Opportunities. On that page on the upper left side select The Volunteer Database. When you do so you will be asked to register. That will ask you to come up with a username and a password to use this data based. I think you will find that they ask that you not use your BC username and password.
3. After you register you will come to a page that says something like Welcome and then this is followed by the username that you have selected. On this page a little below the welcome message you will find a drop down menu under a heading called Find a Volunteer Opportunity. When you use this drop down menu you will find a listing of categories such as Aging, Arts, etc. When you select one of these categories you will get a listing of the agencies they have on their database related. (You will note that by clicking on the hypertext you will be able to find quite a bit of useful information about the agency.) On the same page look on the right side of the page where it says Local Statistics and under that Agencies and a number which as of this writing is 77 (I suspect that it will be different and probably larger number when you check it out). Click on that number. You will then get a page that allows you to click on the word All (right after the letter Z in the listing of the letters of the alphabet across the page). If you do that, you will get a listing of all of the agencies in their database in alphabetical order. Again you will note that by clicking on the hypertext you will be able to find quite a bit of useful information about the agency.
4. When working with the list from the Boston College Volunteer Service and Learning Center keep in mind that this is a list of agencies looking for volunteers not interns. Some will be delighted to take on an intern, but many will not. Also there is a danger that some will take you on as an intern without having worked out any plans to treat you like an intern rather than as a volunteer. You will need to explain the difference or there is the risk of there being no educational component of the experience. My guess is some will be willing to come up with some sort of internship experience for you, but ask a lot of questions and keep in mind there is a risk if they are not used to doing internships.

**When selecting any placement, be sure to ask a lot of questions about what you will actually do and what you will be able to present as the educational component of the internship experience.** A lot of organizations need volunteer staff for low level clerical work such as photocopy, filing, and filling envelopes for fund raisers. If you do not ask questions, you may end up with an internship that is not a good learning experience. You should make sure you will get a useful educational experience (in a broad sense) for the time you invest. With some interesting sounding placements you will find that often your supervisor does not have any work for you. That can be a problem. Sometimes that is not a problem if you are learning a lot by just being there and interacting with the staff

there. But it can also be a problem. If you take the time to get to and from the placement, you do not want to be in effect told all they have for you that day is make work. Ask pointed questions at the outset to make sure they will be able to keep you busy. If you can talk to others who have interned there before you, that could be valuable.

**Please plan to find your placement before the start of the semester** that you plan to take the course. For a September placement, it is best to make your arrangements before you leave for the summer vacation. For a Spring term placement it is best to do it in November or December. Some placements take several weeks for approval. It is not impossible to find a good placement during the first week of classes, but it will take a lot of time and effort if you do it that way. It may also limit your options as many of the most desirable internships could be filled.

If you have any question as to whether a particular internship placement would be acceptable, check with me in advance. If you review the list of past internships you should get a good idea of the range of placements that are likely to be acceptable. If you can make the case that the placement will include a learning component and that it has relevance for your future vocational plans, it is very likely that I will approve your choice.

**What if you are a graduate student?** Graduate students who take this course meet separately, sometimes as a group and sometimes with me individually. For graduate students the course requirements are modified to be appropriate for a graduate student and to fit the purpose of the individual internship placement. The specific requirements will be spelled out in advance in a letter of agreement prior to the start of the internship. Graduate student internships are often research internships, but they can take other forms as well, so long as the link to career goals is clearly specified.