This course is primarily designed for students who wish to acquire practical 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 and some are paid positions, but in all cases it should be viewed primarily as a learning experience. Undergraduates often 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 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 3 credit 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. In class we discuss what is going on at your internship placement and we discuss a number of issues related to your eventual career plans after graduating from Boston College. If you are a graduate student, please see last page of this syllabus.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. You must keep a journal with entries on at least a weekly basis. This journal will primarily deal with your internship experience and your career plans. It must be descriptive, sociological, and analytic. Be sure to see the “Memo on Journals” that will be distributed in class for important details about what to include in your journal. An electronic copy of your journal (Journal Part A) from the start of the semester through October 10 is due Tuesday, October 13 (both as a hard copy in my mailbox in McGuinn 426 (or under my office door) and also as an electronic copy word file attachment, both are due before midnight). Subsequently, send the second half of your journal (Journal Part B) for the period from October 11 through December 9. That part of your journal is due both as a hard copy in my mailbox (or under my office door) and also as a word file attachment via email. Both are due before midnight Monday, December 14. Journal entries should average about 400 words per week. You are welcome to come in to see me at any time to show me a hard copy of some of your journal entries to get feedback on the spot.
2. All students will prepare a 2,000 - 2,500 word term paper. For details about what is expected see the relevant sections of the Memo on Term Papers that I will hand out in class. A strong term paper will typically be very well written and will make effective use of sociological analysis and concepts (e.g., values, social class, social mobility, gender and family roles, etc.). It may be based entirely or largely on material you have read, but it may also include material based on interviews (or conversations) with people to offer insights about the topics you are writing about as well as on personal reflection. The term paper is due as a hard copy in my mailbox or under my office door and as a word file attachment via email both before midnight Monday, December 14. The grade on the term paper will be reduced if it is late; the magnitude of the reduction will increase with greater lateness. You will need to have prepared at least a rough draft of your term paper prior to class on Monday December 7th because you will be asked to summarize the major points in your term paper in connection with that class. You must familiarize yourself with and abide by the official BC rules with respect to academic integrity. Please spend some time reviewing information on that topic at the following website: http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/offices/stserv/academic/univecat/undergrad_catalog/policies_procedures.html#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 done for a different course. You can elect to take the course pass/fail in which case the term paper will become optional, but then the course will not count as one of 3 required upper level electives required for sociology majors; it will just be an elective course.

3. For some classes there will be a short assigned article for class discussion. Typically it will be a short newspaper length article on some topic related to our discussion of career and entry-level job related issues. You are encouraged to call to my attention articles that you think might make for a good class discussion. I may also ask you to do an internet search on a specified topic in preparation for a specific seminar meeting.

4. You will be expected to attend all classes and to participate actively in the class discussion. We will meet as a group approximately once every other week for two hours. I will give the tentative dates for each class meeting on the first day of class. I expect to see each of you outside of class at other times on an as needed basis to privately discuss your internship placement and/or your term paper topic.

5. How you make up for a missed class? If you miss a class, come in to see me to make sure you are aware of the assignment for the following class. However, there is no way feasible way to make up for a class you have missed. My suggestion is that if you miss a class that you go out of your way to be at the top of the class with respect to class participation for the next few classes. I would also suggest that you make it a point to be present for every class as being there for the class discussion is an important part of what this course is about.
6. You are expected to consistently 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 agree on the number of hours per week you will be working, but it must be at least 8 hours (or one full work day) per week and in most cases that is what it should be. Some internship placements will ask for or require more than 8 hours. Some will agree to 8 hours and then push for more hours after you have been there a few weeks. After you agree to the number of hours that you will work, it would be a good idea to help protect yourself by sending your supervisor an email in which you mention the number of hours per week that you have agreed to work and if that is to be an average with the exact number differing from week to week, maybe specify that as well. If there is to be some variation, but variation depending on your needs (e.g., being busy with mid-term exams), if possible, be very clear about the need for some flexibility at certain points during the semester. You are strongly urged to be conservative when it comes to making your agreement as to the number of hours you will be working. Do not agree to more hours than you will be able to provide during the busy weeks when taking mid-terms and toward the end of the semester.

7. At your internship placement you must obtain a field supervisor. If possible, turn in Form B (download it from my website (www2.bc.edu/~jbw) signed by your field supervisor at the first class, otherwise turn it in at our second class. There will also be a separate Form A that you will fill out providing an electronic version of some of the same information and some additional information. I will send Form A to you a week or two after our first class. Your field supervisor will be responsible for overseeing your work at the internship site. He or she must submit a written evaluation of your work to me in the form of a confidential letter or email by Monday December 14th. The best alternative is to ask your supervisor to email the confidential letter to me and at the same time to inform you that the letter has been sent. It is your responsibility to contact me to make sure that I have in fact received that e-mail letter. Please do not assume that your supervisor has sent the letter until you contact me and get confirmation from me that I have received the letter. This is important as it is common for the supervisor to forget to send the e-mail or to get too busy to send it. However, I am not in a position to give you a grade for the course until I have that letter and I do not have the time to repeatedly call your supervisor in an effort to get that letter. A second alternative is for you to hand deliver that letter to me (or to my mailbox in McGuinn 426). As stated in Form B, the letter should discuss: (1) what you did, (2) how well you performed, and (3) make suggestions for improvement.

COURSE GRADING
40% based on your term paper
20% based on class quantity of participation and quality of contributions
20% My assessment of your internship as a learning experience (based on class, your journal, and your supervisor’s letter)
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. Many students have found good internship placements by Googling idealist.org or other such internet based internship listings such as http://www.internships.com/boston-ma.

Another way to find an internship is to look at the list of prior placements that can be found on my personal website. Go first to http://www2.bc.edu/~jbw
Then go to “Courses” and then go to SOCY5540/SOCY5541 Internship List. You can just print the list provided or maybe the listings at the end of my list. Keep in mind that the most recent additions to my list are those at the end and the contact information is likely to be the most useful for the listings toward the end of my list. For many of you a 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. Also, be sure to ask questions about how long the approval process is likely to take. Before you apply to an organization, be sure to find out something about it. You can often find out something useful from the organization’s website.

HOW TO FIND AND USE THE WEB BASED LISTING OF INTERSHIPS MAINTAINED BY THE BOSTON COLLEGE CAREER CENTER

2. Then check out the “Internships” link.
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 fundraisers. 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 are going to invest. In some cases the work will be primarily low-level clerical work. That may be a big problem or it may be acceptable if it puts you in a position to have a lot of interesting discussions with professionals who are doing the kind of work that you hope to be doing a few years from now. Those informal discussions may more than compensate for a lot of clerical work. But if those discussions are few and far between, a placement that is primarily low-level clerical work is probably not the best use of your time. Some students have had success by speaking up, asking for some more demanding tasks, or have pushed their supervisor to provide some tasks that will help make the internship more of a learning experience. With some potentially interesting placements you will find that your supervisor often does not have any work for you. If you do not speak up and ask for more work or if you do not take the initiative to find more work, it may end up being a boring placement. Ask pointed questions at the outset to make sure they will be able to keep you busy and to make sure that it is going to be a valuable learning experience. If you can talk to others who have already interned there before, I urge you to do so.

If possible it is a good idea to find your placement well before the start of the semester that you plan to take the course. For a September placement, for many placements it is best to make your arrangements before you leave for the summer vacation. If you live in the Boston area, it may work to look in August. For some spring term placements November will be a good time to look. Some placements take several weeks for approval; others will be offered on the spot. It is not impossible to find a good placement during the first week of classes, but it will take a lot of extra time effort if you do it that way. It may also limit your options as many internship slots will have been 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 career plans, it is very likely that I will approve your choice.

What if you are a graduate student? Graduate students who take this course generally meet with me separately, sometimes as a group and sometimes 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. Before you sign up for this course come in to see me and we will work out a plan for what you will do, the deliverables that your will produce and the like.