

Psychology and Sociology Internship Information and Instructions

Course numbers: PSYC 4492 and SOCI 4492

Description: An internship is a form of experiential learning that allows students to earn course credits for work completed in an occupational setting. This experience is designed to help students bridge the gap between academic coursework in psychology and sociology and real-world settings. Internships can also help students develop essential occupational skills, including communication, critical and creative thinking, teamwork, and problem-solving while under the supervision of a professional in the field.

Eligibility

To be eligible for the psychology or sociology internship course, students must meet the following requirements:

- Students must be a junior or senior at the time of the internship.
- Internships must be approved in the following order: (1) student's advisor, (2) department chair, and (3) the Faculty Internship Coordinator.
- Students must have a GPA of 2.5 or higher.
 - Interns may not be on academic probation or academic suspension.
- Students are expected to find their own placements for an internship. This provides valuable experience in job hunting and interviewing skills; however, it is recommended for students to consult with the Faculty Internship Coordinator as to what type of internship site would be appropriate. A list of potential internship sites can also be found on the GSW Psychology/Sociology Internship webpage.

Internship Credits

Students can earn three, six, or nine credit hours in psychology or sociology coursework.

1. *Psychology Internship* (PSYC 4492; three, six, or nine credits): The first 3 credits are counted as part of a psychology major or minor. These psychology credits can also be counted as upper-level free electives.
2. *Sociology Internship* (SOCI 4492; three, six, or nine credits): The first 3 credits are counted as part of a sociology major or minor. These sociology credits can also be counted as upper-level free electives.

***Note: Only 3 credits of internship can count towards your major or minor. Other credits can be used for upper-level free electives.**

Time Commitment

- For the spring and fall semesters, students typically should work ten hours each week per 3-credits.
 - 3 credits total: 10 work hours per week
 - 6 credits total: 20 work hours per week
 - 9 credits total: 30 work hours per week
- For the full summer term (June and July), students should work twenty hours each week per 3-credits. (Note the 9-credit hour internship is **not** available during summer semester.)
 - 3 credits total: 20 hours per week
 - 6 credits total: 40 work hours per week

Registration deadlines: You **must** have all paperwork signed and completed by the deadline listed for each semester below.

Summer and Fall: The last day of regular Spring class meetings

Spring: The last day of regular Fall class meetings

Students **cannot** register for internships during final exams, late registration, or the drop/add period.

Frequently Asked Questions about Internships

1. Why should I do an Internship?

An internship is a form of experiential learning that provides you with the opportunity to work directly in a field of interest while developing essential skills, such as communication, critical and creative thinking, teamwork, and problem-solving. You are able to develop these skills while under the supervision of a professional in the field.

An internship can also help you determine whether or not a particular field is right for you. For example, if you really don't like working with kids, it's better to find that out now rather than discovering it after you get a full-time job doing it.

An internship can also give you an edge in finding a job after graduation. In some cases, people find full-time employment at the same place where they do their internship. Other times, people find jobs at other places because someone at their internship site put in a good word for them or let them know about an opportunity elsewhere.

Doing an internship also looks good on graduate school or job applications. It's something you can put on your resume and talk about in personal essays and interviews. If you have a good internship evaluation, your agency supervisor may be willing to write a letter of reference for you.

2. How much academic credit will I receive?

You can receive 3, 6, or 9 credit hours. How much credit you receive depends on the number of hours you put in at your internship site and whether you are doing an internship in Fall, Spring, or Summer.

During Fall and Spring, you earn 3 credits for every 10 hours per week that you spend at your internship site. To earn 3 credits, you spend 10 hours per week on internship-related duties; to earn 6 credits, you spend 20 hours per week on internship-related duties; to earn 9 credits, you spend 30 hours per week on internship-related duties.

During the Summer term, the internship-related hours are doubled: To earn 3 credits, you spend 20 hours per week on internship-related duties; to earn 6 credits, you spend 40 hours per week on internship-related duties. There is not a 9-credit internship opportunity during the summer. Summer internships are available for the full Summer term (usually the months of June and July) only.

What you do during your internship time is determined by you, your agency supervisor, and the nature of the organization where you're interning. However, once you commit to putting in a certain number of hours per week, you are expected to keep that commitment. If occasionally you do less than your scheduled hours in a week, you will need to make it up some other week, so you have the total required number of internship hours.

You must register for these classes to receive academic credit. You can register for a 3-credit, 6-credit, or 9-credit Internship for either PSYC 4492 or SOCI 4492, depending on your major or minor. **Note: Only 3 credits of internship can count towards your major or minor. Other credits can be used for upper-level free electives.*

3. Where should I do my internship?

There is no single answer to this question, because everyone's interests are different. Your instructors are not going to tell you where to do your internship. You are responsible for arranging your internship placement. This means that you need to think about the type of job you want to have after you finish school, locate an agency or organization that provides that type of service, and make contact with that agency to ask whether or not they would be willing to accept an intern.

Having said that, you can certainly ask your advisor, another Psychology/Sociology professor, or the Faculty Internship Coordinator for advice on where to do an internship. Although they won't set one up for you, they might be able to point you in a direction, but you need to have identified your interests beforehand. Also, if you know other students who have done internships, ask them what their experience was like; they might have inside information your professors won't.

Where to look? The GSW Psychology/Sociology Internship web page is a good place to start. When you find an organization that looks compatible with your interests, call them up and find out what their policy is on accepting interns. If you know someone who works at an agency you're interested in, use that contact person to learn more about the possibility of doing an internship.

Here is a list of some past internship sites that students have completed:

- CASA
- Department of Child and Family Services
- GSW Counseling Center
- Lighthouse Children's Advocacy Center
- Magnolia Manor
- Methodist Home for Children and Youth
- Middle Flint Behavioral Healthcare
- Perry Wellness Center
- Aspire Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (Albany)

Remember, this list is not exhaustive. You can choose a new site as long as it will provide adequate hours and psychology- or sociology-related experiences.

4. Will I get paid for being an intern?

You cannot earn a paycheck for an internship. This means you cannot earn internship credit at a site where you are currently employed; however, in some cases, you may receive a stipend from your internship agency to pay for living expenses (e.g., lodging or food), but you cannot earn a paycheck for your services.

5. I already work at a child care center/nursing home/mental health facility. Can I count that as an internship?

No. The goal of an internship is to expose you to something new and different, and by definition a job that you already have is neither new nor different. Doing an internship where you already work also goes against the rule that you cannot be paid a salary for doing an internship.

6. Are the internship credits free?

No. You must pay for the credits just like any other college course.

7. What will I do at my internship?

Your duties and activities at your internship placement will vary depending on where you're working; however, previous interns working in social service organizations have participated in the following activities:

- Leading group activities at an after-school program, nursing home, mental health facility, etc.
- Observing counseling sessions
- Assisting with maintenance of client records
- Conducting psychosocial assessments
- "Shadowing" employees to see what they do in their daily activities
- Sitting in on treatment team meetings
- Compiling information to write brochures about specific topics

Keep in mind you're not there to be "cheap labor.". You are supposed to be getting experience that's related to your future career, and an internship site shouldn't have you spend all your time fetching coffee, making copies, answering the phone, or filing paperwork. If you feel that you are being taken advantage of, or that you've been misled about what is expected of you, talk to the Faculty Internship Coordinator.

8. Will I have assignments for the internship classes I'm taking?

Yes. You are required to keep a weekly journal and submit regular progress reports to your internship instructor. In these reports, you need to describe what you've been doing and how many hours you've worked. You should write in your journal every day you are at your internship site. Your journal entries should reflect on what you're doing, tie your internship experiences to things you've learned in your classes, and consider how it applies to your future career plans. You will be turning these in as part of your grade. You must also submit an evaluation from your agency supervisor at the end of the academic term. An end of the semester reflection paper is also a requirement.

9. Is an internship an easy way to gain college credits?

The internship is not intended to be "easy credits." It will be a different type of work than a traditional class. It might even be less work on some dimensions (e.g., no exams), but it will still require time and effort on your part. It's possible that an internship could be *more* work than some traditional courses. Your instructors take the internship class very seriously and expect you to do the same. If we send out lousy interns, then agencies won't want to work with us in the future, meaning that other students will not be able to do internships. Additionally, you might be interested in working at this agency after you graduate. However, if you haven't made a good impression on them during your internship, they certainly won't hire you as an employee.

Registration Steps for Internship

Step 1: Talk to your academic advisor about your interest. If your advisor agrees, obtain his or her signature on the Approval Form.

Step 2: Find a placement.

Think of an internship as a trial run of a post-college career and go about finding one the way you'd go about finding a job: identify your interests, locate a place that provides that kind of service, and contact them to ask about interning there. If they're interested, they'll probably call you in for an interview. When you go to talk to them, dress nicely (think of this as a job interview), bring a resume, and be prepared to answer questions about your career goals, why you're interested in this agency, and where you might fit in to the agency's mission.

Finding a placement may first require applying to and being accepted to the internship site before finding a specific placement, or it may mean going directly to an agency to see if they will "hire" you for an internship. A supervisor at the agency will need to write a letter of intent verifying that the agency has agreed to the internship and detailing your duties, number of hours, and who your onsite supervisor will be. The agency supervisor will also need to sign the Approval Form (available on the Psychology/Sociology Department website), verifying his or her agreement to act as your agency supervisor for the internship. The letter should be addressed to the Internship Coordinator. Finally, a site administrator (not necessarily your supervisor) will need to sign a contract with GSW, known as a Memorandum of Agreement. This form can also be found on the Psychology/Sociology Department website.

Step 3: Obtain the approval and signature of the department chair.

This is the chair of your major department. The department chair must sign the Approval Form.

Step 4: Complete the Placement Information form.

The Placement Information Form (available on the Psychology/Sociology web site) has contact information, such as phone numbers and addresses. This information will be used in case the Faculty Internship Coordinator needs to contact your agency supervisor.

Step 5: Take the completed forms with all required signatures (Approval Form, Placement Information Form, and Memorandum of Agreement) and the agency's letter of intent with you to the Faculty Internship Coordinator for approval.

If all is in order, the Faculty Internship Coordinator will sign the Approval Form, signifying the student has been accepted into the internship class. The Faculty Internship Coordinator will then ask the department administrative assistant to register you for the internship course. Make a copy of all the forms for your advisor's records. Please note that all the necessary forms and the letter of intent from the internship site must be completed *before* the Faculty Internship Coordinator will approve the internship. Also, the Faculty Internship Coordinator has the final say on whether the internship activities are appropriate for class credit in psychology or sociology.

Notice that there are letters that need to be written and forms that need to get signed by several different people. Setting up an internship is not a last-minute deal (see suggested timeline). It takes time

for the people at the potential internship site to coordinate and figure out who will supervise you, what you will do, what special training you might need, etc. You need to start doing it several months before it's time to register for classes so that you will have everything in place at registration time. You will not be allowed to register for any internship hours unless all of your paperwork has been turned in. The deadlines for registering are as follows:

Summer and Fall: The last day of regular Spring class meetings

Spring: The last day of regular Fall class meetings

Students **cannot** register for internships during final exams, late registration, or the drop/add period.

Internship Timeline

For a Summer Internship

Contact an Internship Site and Begin the Paperwork Process: February to early March

Early Registration Opens: Last week of March

Turn in Internship Application to Faculty Internship Coordinator: Late March to early April

Internship Registration Deadline: The last day of regular Spring class meetings

For a Fall Internship

Contact an Internship Site and Begin the Paperwork Process: February to early March

Early Registration Opens: Last week of March

Turn in Internship Application to Faculty Internship Coordinator: Late March to early April

Internship Registration Deadline: The last day of regular Spring class meetings

For a Spring Internship

Contact an Internship Site and Begin the Paperwork Process: September to early October

Early Registration Opens: Last week of October

Turn in Internship Application to Faculty Internship Coordinator: Early November

Internship Registration Deadline: The last day of regular Fall class meetings

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