

## *Towson University (TU) Program and Internship Course Requirements*

The 45 credits required for the major include fifteen 3-credit courses plus evidence of intermediate competency in a foreign language. Depending on a student's level of proficiency, which is determined by a placement test administered by the Foreign Languages Department, this requirement could amount to additional four courses at most. To fulfill the major's core, students must take four courses from three of the five non-language foundation disciplines. Then, students select 10 upper-level courses to focus on a specific world region (Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, or Middle East-North Africa) or an international topic (e.g. international development, international security). Students are also required to complete a 3-credit research and practicum course, which can include an internship, study abroad course, discipline-specific research methods course, independent study, or thesis. On occasion, the INST Director can allow an additional course in this area to count as an elective, which is more likely for an internship, independent study, or thesis, whereas discipline-based courses taken in a semester-long study abroad program may be used as electives. The INST internship class, INST 493, falls in this practicum category.

The course learning outcomes were: to develop substantive knowledge of international affairs, including different cultures, histories, economic issues, and political issues; promote critical thinking skills; advance students' abilities to communicate the affective meanings of cultural, historical, economic, or political contexts in written and oral communications; and foster personal and professional skills, including job readiness, networking, and experience connecting classroom knowledge to real-world contexts.

### Course requirements for INST 493 (in the period studied) included:

- 1) Preliminary meeting with the INST internship adviser to ensure internship placement acceptability and review requirements
- 2) Initial paperwork delineating internship duties on site, signed by internship on-site supervisor
- 3) Completion of at least 120 on-site hours
- 4) Weekly journals
- 5) Ending semester evaluations, which included a student evaluation of the internship and the on-site supervisor's evaluation of the student and confirmation of number of hours completed
- 6) A 5-page, end-of-semester reflection essay
- 7) A 10-page research paper

Most of these requirements are self-evident, though it should be added that the INST faculty adviser always conducted at least **two phone meetings** with the site supervisor. The first was a preliminary discussion to ensure that course requirements were understood on site; the second was usually a mid-semester check-in. If phone meetings could not be arranged, email exchanges filled in on the same basic schedule.

The **weekly journals** were designed to get a snapshot of how the student was doing that week, review major duties, and provide an opportunity for feedback. Students were told not to just list

duties undertaken, but instead to focus on one or two key events or activities that week and what was learned or gained from that experience. The event could include what a student learned as a passive observer or as an active participant in the organization. Either way, the student was asked to reflect on how that experience impacted them professionally or personally and was submitted via email. The INST faculty adviser replied to each journal entry, sometimes with professional advice and sometimes with needed encouragement.

At the end of the semester, students handed in a **five-page reflection paper** which reviewed overall lessons learned, key experience gained, and the student's self-evaluation of professional and personal gains. The **research paper** addressed a topic agreed upon by the adviser and student around mid-semester and had to be a traditional research product connected in some way to the student's internship placement. For example, a student working with a refugee family from Syria could write a paper on the circumstances which compelled the family to flee or the immigration process.

Although individual requirements composed by the students were given letter grades, the course itself was graded as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory due to the fact that students conducted much of their work in a wide variety of cultural contexts where common grading norms and performance standards could not be guaranteed. As an S/U graded class, there were also no weighted percentages assigned, and there were few problems in assigning a grade of Satisfactory. While this grading scheme followed accepted practices on campus at the time, updates include readjustments to the percentages counted for different assignments.