COURSE DESCRIPTION

Professional Writing Internship. Supervised work-and-learning experience in professional communication under the direction of a University faculty member and an employee of a participating firm. Ten to 20 hours a week of student time are expected during the academic year; 20 to 40 hours a week are expected during a 5-week summer term. Enrollment is contingent upon the availability of internships. Students are selected on the basis of personal qualifications, including GPA, courses taken, recommendations, and an interview. May be repeated with approval of department chairperson. Prereq. for undergraduates: 12 s.h. in Journalism and/or Technical Writing. Credit hours: 1–3.

(During a regular 15- or 16-week term, students receive 1 credit for 10 hours of work per week; 2 for 15 hours per week; and 3 for 20 hours per week.)

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

• It is your responsibility to contact me, the faculty supervisor, during the fifth, tenth, and fourteenth weeks of the term to schedule a meeting. Contact me the week of February 12, the week of March 19, and the week of April 23. (These are the required times; feel free to contact me anytime you need to talk with me.)

• You will maintain a daily work-related log (see “Evaluation”) and bring it to each meeting. The log should detail what you do on the job, as well as what you are learning about the workplace, what you are learning about the profession and your place in it, and any problems you encounter on the job. If you encounter any potentially serious problem or safety concern related to the internship or place of work, please contact me immediately.

• You will maintain a portfolio containing significant samples of work completed, which you will also bring to each meeting.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The principal goal of this course is to reinforce classroom theory and practice by providing students on-the-job training in writing/editing. The course fulfills the following specific objectives:

• To enable interns to evaluate realistically a decision to enter the field of professional communication or journalism.

• To improve students’ writing/editing skills.

• To help students compete more effectively in the job market.
• To enable interns to assess the value of their professional communication and/or journalism courses as preparation for jobs in business, industry, government, and/or journalism.

The course also provides the following benefits for the university and the employer:

• To provide feedback that will enable faculty to adapt course content to prepare students for the workplace.
• To provide employers with educated and committed interns who can function in and contribute to the sponsoring organization.

ACTIVITIES

Interns should spend nearly all of their time engaged in writing and writing-related activities such as editing, design, interviewing, or conducting research. At the start of the internship period, students may be assigned a special project to complete, or they may be assimilated into the routine on-site work of their employer’s department.

Sometimes problems arise concerning some aspect of the internship. If you feel that the kind of work you are doing, the hours you are working, or any other aspect of the internship is developing differently than it was supposed to, contact me, the faculty supervisor, as soon as possible and explain the problem. Likewise, talk with the industry employer and faculty supervisor immediately if you have questions concerning the safety of the work environment.

Because an academic term is so brief, you cannot afford to ignore problems in hopes that conditions will right themselves. Difficulties should be resolved immediately, and I will be glad to help.

By the same token, if employers are dissatisfied with any aspect of the internship, they should talk with the student and (if they feel it is necessary) with me as soon as possible.

EVALUATION/GRADING

Credit hours (1–3) are to be specified before work begins. The faculty supervisor has the responsibility for assigning the course grade, ABCDF.

Considerations include:

• Periodic feedback from employers. Employers will complete an Internship Evaluation Form (supplied by the faculty supervisor) two or three times per term.
• A journal or log kept by the intern detailing activities and commenting on them.
• A portfolio containing samples of the student’s work (provided release of such samples has been cleared by the employer).
• A Student Internship Assessment Form, completed by the student at the end of the term.

Upon receipt of the Internship Evaluation Form, the faculty supervisor may contact the employer to discuss the periodic evaluation of the intern. Interns and faculty supervisors will meet after each of these evaluations to discuss the intern’s progress. The final grade for the course will be assigned on the basis of the information and material supplied by the student plus the employer’s and faculty supervisor’s assessments of the student’s performance.

If all goes well, the internship should provide you new skills and insights, samples for a portfolio, references, and perhaps useful contacts for future employment.

The drop date is Saturday, March 24, by noon. Spring break is March 12–18 (you and your employer need to discuss whether you will work during break week). Exam week begins May 7.

We hope your internship will be a valuable and satisfying experience!