

Syllabus --Gerontology 497: Gerontology Internship
Minnesota State University, Mankato

Purpose: The Gerontology Internship is designed to:

- provide opportunities to apply classroom learning;
- acquire new knowledge;
- develop skills in applying gerontological perspectives and methods in a real-life setting;
- experience professional socialization; and
- explore a career.

It also serves as a vehicle for the student to become more aware of personal strengths and identify areas in which further growth is needed.

A three-credit Gerontology internship is required of students completing the Gerontology minor. The undergraduate internship requires 40 hours of field placement per credit. For example, a three-credit internship=120 hours or one day a week for 15 weeks.

Goals: Students should walk away from this experience having gained:

- A clearer understanding of the knowledge base and specific skills required to use gerontological perspectives and methods in a professional work setting.
- Students should also become more aware of the complexities of gerontological practice and the factors related to positive social change.
- Students should better understand the interactions between various agencies, between agencies and the public, as well as the political aspects of program maintenance and change.

Pre-Requisites:

- Completed internship application and consent of faculty internship supervisor
- Admission to the Gerontology minor; or by permission
- Junior or senior status
- Cumulative GPA of at least 2.5 at the time of application. (No D's, I's or IP's in major)
- Recommendations from advisor and/or program director may also be required
- Ability to write correctly, concisely, and accurately

Possible Internship Sites: Possible placements include human service agencies; state, county or federal agencies; nonprofit community organizations; corporate employers; educational institutions or organizations; etc. Sites must allow for achievement of the student's particular learning outcomes and must be able to provide competent supervision. The student designs the internship to meet his/her particular professional interests.

The final choice of agency and the interview process should be coordinated with the faculty internship supervisor. The student should be prepared to discuss insightfully how this fieldwork placement can strengthen his or her competence and marketability in gerontological practice.

*****Students should not contact the agency until approved for an internship by the faculty supervisor.***

Agency Contribution and Responsibilities: The agency accepting an internship makes a critically important contribution to the professional socialization of the student and serves as a bridge between the University and employment in the field. The field supervisor is responsible for:

1. Orienting the student to the agency's mission and operating procedures;
2. Reviewing the student's first draft of the learning outcomes and assisting the student with refining them as necessary so they are appropriate guides to learning during the field experience;
3. Designing a work plan for the student;
4. Regularly observing and conferring with the student to monitor progress toward achieving the learning outcomes and adjusting the work plan as needed;
5. Conducting a final evaluation conference with the student;
6. Submitting a final evaluation of the student to the faculty supervisor.

Learning Contract: Students will draw up a learning contract setting out learning goals, methods used to meet those goals, and method of evaluation. The faculty internship supervisor, the field supervisor, and the student shall sign the contract. **Instructions for creating the learning contract are attached.**

Students may not register or start the internship without a signed contract.

Registration

After a signed contract is in place, the student should ask the faculty supervisor for permission to register for GERO 497. Permission will be entered into the system, but you still must complete the online registration process. You must enter the number of credits. For example, for 3 credits, enter 0300.

Evaluation of the Student: The Internship is graded on a P/N basis. A "P" will be recorded by the faculty supervisor when all requirements have been met at a satisfactory level of quality as indicated by the student's performance, taking into account the journal, the final paper, the required meetings with the faculty internship supervisor, the agency evaluation of the student, and other relevant information.

Expectations of the Student: While in the field, students are expected to exhibit a high level of maturity and performance as well as a willingness to expend maximum time and effort for the agency. The highest standards of professional conduct are expected at all times. Remember: you are representing Minnesota State University, Mankato, and yourself. Please make sure the experience is one of which you will be proud.

Professional misconduct, as defined by the field supervisor and/or the faculty supervisor, is adequate reason for termination of a placement, denial of future placements, and a final grade of Fail.

General Plan for Internship:

- In the first phase, the student may become oriented to the agency by reading procedure manuals, becoming familiar with office practices, and observing staff in the performance of their duties.
- Later the student should be able to perform tasks under relatively close supervision. For example, a student may do a report and have it compared to one done on the same topic by an experienced employee. Or, the student may be given the opportunity to interview a client under supervision. This is the phase in which the student "tries their wings" while being coached and critiqued relatively closely.
- When student is appropriately oriented and has had a chance to perform duties with supervision, he or she may be able carry out responsibilities similar to those of regular entry-level employees of the agency. While individual situations will vary, it is intended that students will proceed as quickly as possible into this phase and give significant service to the agency throughout their remaining time. In addition to in-house work, many agencies are able to provide other kinds of experiences for the student such as accompanying staff to conferences, participating in team meetings, and visiting related agencies in the community.

During Internship

Journal: The student maintains a daily journal as a record of observations and activities, and reflections on how learning goals are being met, using the language of Gerontology. The journal serves as a source of information that will be helpful in the writing of the final report and in tracing their personal and professional development. **The journals should be emailed to the faculty supervisor after being at the site two days and submitted in the Dropbox in D2L every two weeks after that. (Instructions for keeping good journals are attached.)**

Online Discussions: The intern interacts with other students in the field through an online discussion board. After you are registered and the semester begins, go to Desire2Learn on the university website for dates, instructions, and other useful resources.

Site visits: The faculty supervisor may visit the agency at some time during the semester to meet with the student and the field supervisor.

Communication: If at any time the student or feels she or he is having communication problems or any other difficulty, she or he should contact the Faculty Supervisor immediately. Likewise, the field supervisor should contact the faculty supervisor at any time there is a need to discuss the placement.

At the End of the Internship:

1. **Evaluation:** Upon completing the internship, the student shall request a written performance evaluation and have it sent directly to the faculty supervisor by the last day of the semester. This report may take the form of a narrative letter or may be submitted on an evaluation form normally used by the agency. The agency supervisor is asked to:

- A. Verify the total time on site spent by the intern;
- B. Evaluate the performance of the intern;
- C. Assess the suitability of the intern for future employment.

2. **Final Paper:** You will write a paper summarizing what you've learned through the internship, again stated in gerontological terms. The paper should be:

- minimum 3 pages, typed, double-spaced
- written in a scholarly manner with an introduction, appropriate subheadings, and a conclusion

Submit a copy to the faculty supervisor in the Dropbox in D2L and the field supervisor by the last class day of the semester.

The most important aspect of the final paper shall be your synthesis of the gerontological insights you gained from the internship and how you applied gerontological perspectives and/or methods in the internship situation.

Failure to Fulfill Obligations to Placement Site or Faculty Supervisor:

Students are required to fulfill the obligations stated in the learning contract and any other expectations of the host agency as they would in regular employment. If you must be absent from your duties due to illness or some other emergency, please notify the field supervisor immediately as you would your employer. Failure to fulfill any of these obligations will result in a failing grade for the internship. If there are any problems with your internship experience, please contact the faculty internship supervisor immediately.

Faculty Internship Supervisor:

Leah Rogne, Ph.D.

Associate Professor

Department of Sociology and Corrections

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KEEPING GOOD JOURNALS

1) Keeping track of time: You need to record the time in/time out, hours each day, and running total of hours. Then you, your site supervisor, and I can clearly see you where you are in terms of completion of the required hours.

2) Reflecting gerontologically: Most beginning interns do very well in recording the activities in which they are engaged but are less likely to be systematic in reflecting on the significance of what they are seeing or making the connections to their existing body of gerontological knowledge. Each day's journal needs to include a reflection on the significance of what you are doing and an attempt to apply gerontological knowledge in terms of the goals you set forth in your Learning Contract.

Make this kind of reflection a daily part of your journaling. Sometimes this reflection will be brief and sketchy, and other times it will be more extensive and in-depth. It will depend on the nature of what you're doing on a daily basis. But make it a habit to be thinking reflectively every day. This will maximize the quality of your experience and the transferability of the skills you are learning.

Being able to generalize from a specific experience to a wider context will help you as you interpret this experience to a potential employer who wants to know just what you gained from your internship that would be useful in a new work situation.

If you have taken courses in qualitative methods, ethnography, or applied sociology, you should apply the principles of taking good field notes to your internship journals.

Below is the required format for your journals.

Date: June 3, 2008
Time: 1 pm – 5 pm
Hours: 4 hrs.
Total: 14 hrs.

Activities:

Write what you did, what you observed, in as much detail as you can record.

Reflection:

Reflect on the significance of what you did and the patterns you are seeing. What concepts from Gerontology do you see in play? How would you look at the situation from various gerontological perspectives (life course perspective, political economy of aging, continuity theory, cumulative disadvantage, etc.)? Think of concepts from your sociology, psychology, or biology of aging courses or from health and aging or biology of aging.

Your reflections will be useful to you as you put together your final paper. Review them and synthesize the hands-on experience you have had in the internship and the gerontological knowledge you've gained in your coursework.

GERONTOLOGY INTERNSHIP LEARNING CONTRACT--Instructions

Purpose and Process:

The internship learning contract is a formal written statement of the expected educational outcomes of an internship. It is intended both as a guide to planning internship experiences and as a check on progress as the internship proceeds.

1. After approval from the faculty internship supervisor, the student meets with a potential supervisor to discuss possible duties, goals, and methods for accomplishing the goals.
2. The student prepares a first draft of the goals he or she wishes to achieve, methods of achieving the goals, and the way the learning outcomes will be evaluated.
3. The student shall review the draft of the contract first with the faculty supervisor, second with the field supervisor, and then make any necessary changes.
4. Field supervisor, faculty supervisor, and the student sign and date the contract. The student shall provide a copy of the signed contract to both supervisors.

Guidelines for Writing the Learning Contract:

The learning contract is typewritten. Use the Learning Contract Template posted on the Internship website. The contract includes:

1. Educational Goal or Outcome:

Describe what you intend to learn from the internship. What do you want to find out or be able to do as a result of the experience? Is your primary aim to gain, expand, apply, or test out a particular body of knowledge? Or is it to acquire or improve upon skills such as counseling, training, interviewing, advocacy, public speaking, or administration? Be specific. Write one sentence for each objective and start each sentence with the words "To learn..." or "To apply..." or "To practice..." etc.

2. Methods:

Specify the activities you expect to undertake to achieve each goal. Will you observe and assist particular staff or undergo training? Will you ask your supervisors to recommend relevant readings or attend related workshops or conferences? Will you systematically collect data for a profile or survey? Will you observe or participate in staff, board, or community meetings? Will you ask certain individuals to observe you at work, and give you feedback and suggestions?

3. Evaluation:

Note that you will keep a daily journal and write a final analytical paper.

The daily journal should be word processed and shall include:

1. Date, Time In & Time Out; Hours that Day; Total Hours
2. Description of **activities** for the day, expressed in terms of your goals;
3. A **reflection** on what you learned, expressed in terms of the gerontological knowledge, skills, methods, etc. you are addressing through the internship. This is the most important part of your journal.

Submit your journals by email to the faculty supervisor after you've been at the site two times and then every two weeks in the D2L Dropbox throughout the internship.

Regular Contact with Faculty Supervisor:

You are required to participate in an online discussion with the faculty supervisor and other interns twice during the semester. If you do not post in these discussions, you may receive an incomplete or a failing grade for the internship.

*****You will not be allowed to register or begin the internship until there is a learning contract signed by the field supervisor and the faculty supervisor and submitted to the faculty supervisor.***

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4/9/09