Syllabus for 2011-12 academic year  
(applies May 2011 through August 2012)

Political Science  
Work Term  
POSC 260W, 360W and 460W

Course Description  
Political Science 260W, 360W and 460W feature a full-time, experiential learning placement in government, voluntary organizations, political parties, unions, or other institutions involved in public affairs. Job placements are for 12 weeks at 35 hours per week for a minimum total of 420 hours. The total number of completed hours presides over their distribution. At least one of these work terms must occur during the Fall or Winter semester and the final work term must precede the final academic term. Students are also required to complete professional development seminars through the Division of Co-operative Education.

Course Notes  
Students may elect to complete one other course during a placement, subject to the approval of the Head of Department, as long as this does not interfere with the successful completion of the work term. POSC 460W has a weight of three credit hours which students can use towards their Political Science degree requirements. Students are expected to check MUN e-mail regularly. Good communication is especially important when the work term placement is being set up.

Prerequisites: All Political Science work term courses require enrollment in the Political Science Co-operative Education (PSCE) program, a minimum overall average of 65%, and a minimum average of 70% in POSC courses. The course may only be added with the consent of the course administrator. Additional prerequisites: For 260W, 18 POSC credit hours; for 360W, completion of 260W; for 460W, completion of 360W.

Upon registration in 260W, 360W or 460W students will be expected to attend professional development seminars delivered at the University. Topics may include, among others: résumé preparation; interview training; work term evaluation; preparation of reflective essays; career planning; employment seeking skills; self-employment; ethics and professional concepts; behavioural requirements in the workplace; assertiveness in the workplace; and industrial safety.
Course Components

The designated Political Science faculty member grades the briefing note (260W & 460W only) and the cabinet submission (360W & 460W only). The Division of Co-operative Education coordinator grades the student’s job performance and the reflective essay. Overall evaluation of POSC 260W, 360W or 460W will be noted on the student’s transcript as follows:

- **Pass with Distinction:** Indicates outstanding performance in the briefing note and/or cabinet paper, the reflective essay and the job performance.
- **Pass:** Indicates that performance meets expectations in the briefing note and/or cabinet paper, the reflective essay and the job performance.
- **Fail:** Indicates failing performance in the briefing note and/or cabinet paper, reflective essay and/or the job performance.

To be eligible for promotion from the work term and continuation in the PSCE a student cannot be awarded a Fail.

Due Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall semester</th>
<th>Winter semester</th>
<th>Spring semester</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submit part 1 of</td>
<td>End of week two</td>
<td>End of week two</td>
<td>End of week two</td>
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<tr>
<td>evaluation form</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submit confidentiality</td>
<td>End of week two</td>
<td>End of week two</td>
<td>End of week two</td>
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<td>agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Briefing note</td>
<td>Last Tuesday in</td>
<td>Last Tuesday in</td>
<td>Last Tuesday in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>September</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>May</td>
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<tr>
<td>Site visit by Co-op</td>
<td>Middle of semester</td>
<td>Middle of semester</td>
<td>Middle of semester</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cabinet paper</td>
<td>Last Tuesday in</td>
<td>Last Tuesday in</td>
<td>Last Tuesday in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>October</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>June</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflective essay</td>
<td>Last day of classes</td>
<td>Last day of classes</td>
<td>Last day of classes</td>
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<td>Submit part 2 of</td>
<td>Last day of classes</td>
<td>Last day of classes</td>
<td>Last day of classes</td>
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<td>evaluation form</td>
<td>Last day of classes</td>
<td>Last day of classes</td>
<td>Last day of classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submit work log</td>
<td>Last day of classes</td>
<td>Last day of classes</td>
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Note: Follow the “university diary” for dates concerning the work term placement for Co-operative Education students. Students who begin a work term that deviates from the semester start and end dates can immediately consult with the Co-op Coordinator or Political Science faculty member to establish revised deadlines.

Web Resources

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Resource</th>
<th>Web Address</th>
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<tr>
<td>Briefing note: Example #1</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mun.ca/posc/internships/Briefing_note.pdf">http://www.mun.ca/posc/internships/Briefing_note.pdf</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briefing note: Example #2</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mun.ca/posc/internships/Briefing_note2.pdf">http://www.mun.ca/posc/internships/Briefing_note2.pdf</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet paper: Example #1</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mun.ca/posc/internships/Cabinet_paper.pdf">http://www.mun.ca/posc/internships/Cabinet_paper.pdf</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cabinet paper: Example #2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic dishonesty</td>
<td>mun.ca/posc/undergraduate/planning/plagiarism.php</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career Development and</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mun.ca/cdel/career/">http://www.mun.ca/cdel/career/</a></td>
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<td>Experiential Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Division of Co-operative</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mun.ca/coop/">http://www.mun.ca/coop/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Centre</td>
<td>mun.ca/writingcentre</td>
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**Work Term Placement (i.e., Job Performance)**

**Learning objectives:**
- Apply and grow knowledge and practice skills learned in Political Science studies.
- Gain exposure to a career-related work environment.
- Benefit from a work supervisor’s guidance.

**Securing a Placement**

With assistance from the Division of Co-operative Education (DCE), students must secure a paid work placement. Students must provide a cover letter and résumé to the DCE. At the start of the job competition the Division of Co-operative Education will normally provide a detailed description of each available position.

The dates for starting and finishing each work term are shown in the University Diary.

Work placements cannot be guaranteed though every effort is made to ensure that appropriate employment is made available.

**Work Term Notes**

Competition for placements is heaviest in the Spring semester and students are strongly recommended to complete one Spring placement outside of the St. John’s area.

International placements, in particular with international organizations such as the United Nations or with non-governmental organizations abroad, usually do not offer remuneration to individuals doing short-term work placements with them. Since work experiences with such organizations are extremely beneficial to students’ future job prospects and the unique work experience that they offer, the Department may waive the requirement that a particular work placement is paid, on a case-by-case basis.

With permission of the DCE coordinator, and in consultation with the designated faculty member, a student may complete a maximum of two work terms in consecutive semesters.

A student who accepts a job placement and who subsequently withdraws from a work term without acceptable cause will be required to withdraw permanently from the PSCE. Students who drop a work term without prior approval from both the DCE coordinator and the designated faculty member, or who do not honour an agreement to work with an employer, or who conduct themselves in such a manner as to cause their discharge from the job, will normally be awarded a grade of *Fail* for the work term in question.

**Interview Preparation**

Research the organization that you are seeking to work with. Identify the exact room location of the interview, directions and parking. Prepare to arrive 5 minutes early (e.g., some buildings require that visitors show ID). Know your résumé (e.g., review it before going to an interview, make sure it is revised). Develop a list of potential questions and responses. Communicate with references to ensure they are aware that they may be contacted. Plan to dress appropriately. Be prepared for behavioral/situational questions. Common interview mistakes include: lack of preparation; inappropriate appearance; failure to ask questions; over- or under-answering questions; poor attitude; exaggerating or being deceitful; poor non-verbal communication.
During the Interview
Beware of non-verbal communication. Limit distractions (e.g., turn off cell phone, throw out gum). Provide accurate and appropriate information on your qualifications and interests. Ask questions (e.g., what kind of work can I expect to be doing?). Thank the interviewer(s) and shake hands. Ask for a business card.

At the Start of the Work Placement
During the first week of a work placement, students must provide a completed confidentiality and professional conduct agreement to the DCE coordinator. Within two weeks of starting a work term, students are required to submit a plan of learning objectives for that placement to the Division of Co-operative Education.

During the Work Placement
Use lunchtime to network (e.g., learn how to small talk and ask questions, get to know office staff). Check in with your supervisor or other designate. Be attentive (e.g., learn names, demonstrate that you are listening). Learn related jargon. Don’t abuse technology (e.g., using the copier for personal use, incoming cell phone calls). Be positive and enthusiastic (e.g., seek out opportunities). Be flexible and adaptable (e.g., last minute tasks, be solution-oriented). Avoid asking for special favours.

At the End of the Work Placement
Create a job title that represents your work term experience. Create a job description that corresponds with the job title. Update your resume with the new job title and job description. Send a thank you letter/card to work term employer. Create a list of contacts from the work term. Begin a career portfolio (e.g., letter of reference, evaluation, brochures, written work – obtain approvals from the employer as appropriate). Visit the Centre for Career Development for further career development needs including mock interviews and individual consultations.

Grading of the Work Term
Evaluation of the job performance will be classified on the student’s transcript as one of: outstanding, above expectations, satisfactory, fail. The Division of Cooperative Education provides employers with an evaluation form to assess a student’s performance.
**Briefing Note (POSC 260W & 460W only)**
Method of submission: e-mail a Word file from your MUN account to the designated faculty member (e.c. yourself to ensure that it went through)

Learning objectives:
- Improved awareness of the need to write concisely.
- Exposure to a regular component of public administration.
- Development of a skill that may be required during the student’s placement and/or career.

**Grading of the Briefing Note**
The briefing note is graded by the designated Political Science faculty member. Its evaluation will be classified on the student’s transcript as one of: outstanding, above expectations, satisfactory, fail.

**Overview**
A briefing note is what it seems: a tightly written summary that quickly but objectively informs the reader about key subject material. Briefing notes are regularly used within government organizations as a means of conveying complex information in a digestible manner to executives. To maximize efficiency and the approvals process all authors throughout the organization are required to strictly adhere to a standardized presentation format.

**Format**
Each student needs to prepare a briefing note on a topical political issue in the news that will be assigned by the course administrator. No two students will write about the same issue and the assignment of topics will be communicated using @mun.ca email addresses.

A briefing note is exactly 2 full pages. It must present accurate information in a simple readable style using all of the headings below. A cover page is not needed. Your audience would be your work term placement employer or it could be a faculty member. Basically, pretend that a supervisor—who doesn’t have time to read the article but who needs to know the main points for an important meeting—requests a briefing note so that he/she can quickly become familiar with the major points and concepts on an issue that s/he may know very little about. Students are expected to closely follow the required format and to refer to the example provided.

- **Topic** (1 sentence identifying the issue using key words)
- **Background** (1 paragraph summarizing what led up to the situation)
- **Status** (1 paragraph describing what the latest situation is)
- **Key Considerations** (bullet points about important related facts)
- **Recommendations** (1 paragraph that identifies conclusions about the above facts and the general course of action that you would advise to the policy decision-maker)

**Research**
The assigned policy issue needs to be researched using a variety of credible online news sources though it may be supplemented slightly by academic materials. Briefing notes do not ordinarily provide a list of sources however the instructor will ask for this documentation if it is suspected that information was not sufficiently presented in the author’s own words.
How to Submit
The due date of the briefing note is specified elsewhere in this syllabus. It is to be submitted as a Word or PDF document by email to the designated Political Science faculty member. When emailing the document from your MUN account attach the file and c.c. yourself, ideally to another email address, so that you can verify that the message went through and that the attachment can be opened. Technology issues cannot constitute an excuse for late submissions. You must follow-up if you have not received a confirmation message from the recipient within 24hrs.

Further Guidance
The following tips for preparing briefing notes are also generally applicable for cabinet submissions.

### Briefing Note “Do’s and Don’ts”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Briefing Note Do’s</th>
<th>Briefing Note Don’ts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Know your reader’s perspective and concerns.</td>
<td>Don't assume that your reader has the same technical knowledge as you do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anticipate and answer your reader’s questions.</td>
<td>Don't use too many acronyms or abbreviations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep it short: 2 pages maximum.</td>
<td>Stay away from jargon and technical terms (define them if you have to use them).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be clear and concise: write sentences averaging 15-20 words to a maximum of 30 words; paragraphs of no more than 5-6 sentences, or 7-9 lines.</td>
<td>Avoid strings of nouns.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use the active voice and action verbs.</td>
<td>Avoid using too many adverbs and adjectives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Get to the point quickly: present the most important information first (giving general information before specific).</td>
<td>Don't include more than one idea for each paragraph.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Put the right information in the right section.</td>
<td>Don't introduce new elements or repeat information in the conclusion and recommendations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Present your rationale clearly and logically.</td>
<td>Don't use ambiguous statements or vague timelines.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Present information in small and manageable chunks: use bullets and tables when needed.</td>
<td>Don't hide or diminish the seriousness of a problem or situation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use appendices for details but don't overdo it.</td>
<td>Avoid presenting unsubstantiated arguments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be clear on the issue of the briefing note.</td>
<td>Refrain from giving your personal opinions: stick to concrete facts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarize what you want the reader to grasp quickly.</td>
<td>Don't overwhelm your reader with details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide pertinent and complete information based on objective analysis and consultations.</td>
<td>Don't write before you are clear on the objective of the request.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make clear recommendations linked to facts.</td>
<td>Don't start writing the summary before you finish writing the content of the briefing note.</td>
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<tr>
<td>State possible consequences when applicable.</td>
<td>Limit the number of changes made based on style and personal preferences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make a plan and focus on the core issue: aim for quality arguments, not quantity of information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Check all the facts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be discerning when copying and pasting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discuss the proposed changes with the editors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learn from previous briefing notes.</td>
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Cabinet Submission (POSC 360W & 460W only)
Method of submission: e-mail a Word file from your MUN account to the designated course administrator only (c.c. yourself to ensure that it went through)

Learning objectives:
- Improved awareness of the need to write concisely.
- Exposure to a regular component of public administration.
- Development of a skill that may be required during the student’s career.

Grading of the Cabinet Paper
The cabinet paper is graded by the designated Political Science faculty member. Its evaluation will be classified on the student’s transcript as one of: outstanding, above expectations, satisfactory, fail.

Overview
A cabinet submission is a succinct analysis of a policy issue that recommends a course of action to the executive branch of government. It provides advice to ministers who consider the document’s information during cabinet meetings or committees. This guidance is developed based on a review of data and consultations with stakeholders. Good research and strong writing is essential, with information presented in an objective manner, and to maximize efficiency and the approvals process all authors must strictly adhere to a standardized presentation format.

Format
Each student needs to prepare a cabinet submission to either the federal or provincial cabinet. The total page count should be 6 succinctly written pages, plus a bibliography. Use the following headings.

- **Title** (1 sentence identifying the issue using key words)
- **Proposal** (1-2 sentences stating what the cabinet is being asked to decide. Do not list the recommendations here)
- **Executive Summary** (1 paragraph succinctly summarizing the main issues)
- **Background** (2-3 paragraphs providing a brief explanation for what policy issue or external circumstance led to the need for a cabinet decision; the latest government position on the issue if it is publicly known; and a summary of recent developments)
- **Comment** (1-2 pages providing detail for ministers to understand the situation. This should be an objective provision of information and succinct arguments. The recommended course of action must be identified as well as major alternatives, all of which identify reasons supporting and opposing the proposal. If necessary you can use customized subheadings and include data)
- **Consultation** (1-2 paragraphs identifying which stakeholders should be consulted. This may include internal government departments; external governments or Crown agencies; interest groups and other non-governmental organizations)
- **Financial Implications** (1-2 paragraphs remarking on the financial implications of the recommendations, including any opportunities for cost recovery)
- **Gender Perspective** (1-2 sentences identifying any disproportionate effect of the recommendation on women, if any)
- **Aboriginal Perspective** (1-2 sentences identifying any disproportionate effect of the recommendation on Aboriginals, if any)
- **Disability Perspective** (1-2 sentences identifying any disproportionate effect of the recommendation on persons with disabilities, if any)
**Rural Perspective** (1-2 sentences identifying any disproportionate effect of the recommendation on residents in rural communities, if any)

**Environmental Perspective** (1-2 sentences identifying any disproportionate effect of the recommendation on the environment, if any)

**Communication Strategy** (1 paragraph describing possible communications and media activities to announce or promote cabinet’s decision)

**Recommendation** (1 page providing the Minister’s recommendation. This must be clear, direct and be understandable for anyone not intimately familiar with the subject matter. The recommendation should begin “The Minister of X recommends that Cabinet…”)

**Alternatives** (1 page providing two alternate recommendations that are based on information presented earlier in the paper)

**Data Appendices** (optional; these do not count as part of the 5-6 page limit)

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**Research**

Considerable research will be required to prepare a strong cabinet submission. This begins with consulting news sources and reviewing a range of applicable information available on the sponsoring government department’s website. This is to be supplemented with ideas obtained from academic books and journal articles that will be used to inform the policy recommendation and alternatives. Policies proposed by non-governing political parties and by interest groups might also be considered.

**How to Submit**

The due date of the cabinet paper is specified elsewhere in this syllabus. It is to be submitted as a Word or PDF document by email to the designated Political Science faculty member. When emailing the document from your MUN account attach the file and c.c. yourself, ideally to another email address, so that you can verify that the message went through and that the attachment can be opened. Technology issues cannot constitute an excuse for late submissions. You must follow-up if you have not received a confirmation message from the recipient within 24hrs.

**Further Guidance** (source: CabGuide, 2010)

Cabinet papers should “be concise, coherent and logical; be as short as possible, without excluding essential information; be written in plain language; not assume the reader has expert knowledge; be structured so that the key issues stand out; avoid detailed lists – summarize instead; use charts and diagrams where they can assist understanding; have clear recommendations where the decisions needed can be easily assessed; use appendices to include detailed information that is vital”.

To ensure that the paper is well-written, “Ask someone who is familiar with the topic and someone who is not to peer review the draft. Remember, you are writing not only for your minister but also for other ministers who may have no detailed knowledge of the subject matter. Imagine you are a busy minister who has 20 papers to read and understand in a short time frame.”

Good recommendations “identify all of the decisions needed; are accurate in every detail; don’t leave any room for doubt about what is being decided; make sense independently of the paper; set out clear options for ministers to decide between, if necessary”.

Reflective Essay (POSC 260W, 360W & 460W)

Learning objectives:
- Recognition of the strengths and limitations of university education.
- Consideration of how knowledge and skills obtained in university will be used in the workplace.
- Opportunity to establish a foundation assessment of career awareness prior to the placement.
- Recognition of how the work placement experience knowledge will be used.
- Ability to identify the career-related strengths and weaknesses of the university experience.
- Comprehension of how the work term has or has not led to personal growth.

Grading of the Reflective Essay
The reflective essay is graded by the Co-operative Education coordinator. Its evaluation will be classified on the student’s transcript as one of: outstanding, above expectations, satisfactory, fail.

Overview
Students are to write a reflective essay so that they can recognize the extent of their personal and professional growth since the beginning of the placement. Such reflective exercises are intended to be highly objective whereby the student balances the strengths and weaknesses of the program of study. This is to be prepared at a high standard that is suitable for submission in any equivalent course.

Format
This academic essay is a 3,700 to 4,200 word paper that ultimately answers three questions: (1) what kinds of careers exist for political science graduates; (2) how your academic background in political science has/has not applied to the work you have performed as an intern; and (3) what you have learned about politics from your work as an intern. It must be presented in a formal manner and written objectively. The following headings are to appear.

Careers in Political Science (According to research, what kinds of careers can a political science graduate expect to pursue? What kinds of skills are in demand that political science students develop? What job prospects exist for political scientists?)

Summary of Activities (To what extent were the Division of Cooperative Education tasks useful? What happened in your interview(s)? What did you do on your first day? What duties and opportunities did your placement involve? What did you accomplish? Who did you work with? Network with? What skills did you enhance or learn? What were your strengths and weaknesses? What is the best thing? The worst thing?)

Interpreting the Experience (What impact did your work have on the organization that you worked for? What was your main contribution? What would have made it a better experience? What have you learned about yourself? What have you learned about the workplace? What insights have you gained? What surprised you about the experience?)

Relating the Experience (How did the work term relate to your post-secondary studies? In what ways were your Political Science courses most relevant to your placement experience? How were they least relevant? How were other university courses applicable or not applicable? How did the work term relate to your career goals? What did you learn from sharing experiences with other students in the course?)

Incorporating the Experience (What behaviours will change as a result of this work term? What will you do differently? How can you incorporate this into your future employment positions? Volunteer opportunities?)
Research
Considerable research is required in the first section where you are required to provide information about career opportunities for political science graduates. You may wish to also consult your transcript (to remind you of what courses you completed), to refer to the university calendar (to identify your degree requirements and course descriptions), and to the Department of Political Science website (for general purposes, including identifying courses you opted against taking). While this should be an enjoyable exercise it must be presented in a reasonably formal manner. As with any university essay the emphasis must be on credible sources and may not use only online material. Facts must be properly referenced.

How to Submit
The due date of the reflective essay is specified elsewhere in this syllabus. It is to be submitted as a Word or PDF document by email to the Division of Co-operative Education coordinator. When emailing the document from your MUN account be sure to attach the file and c.c. yourself, ideally to another email address, so that you can verify that the message went through and that the attachment can be opened. Technology issues cannot constitute an excuse for late submissions. You must follow-up if you have not received a confirmation message from the recipient within 24hrs.

Course Late Policy
Students are required to follow the “university diary” for dates concerning the work term placement for Co-operative Education students. Students who begin a work term that deviates from the semester start and end dates is not automatically entitled to an extension on assignment due dates.

Late assignments will be penalized by the course administrator at a rate of 10 percent per 24 hours (including weekends). For instance an essay that would have received 24/30 and is submitted one day late would receive 21/30 (10 percent of 30 = 3 marks). Submitting assignments by e-mail from a MUN account is preferred however it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the file was received on time; students are advised to check by phone or in-person to ensure that the administrator has received your work. Email or other technological problems cannot constitute an excuse for submitting late work. Students providing valid medical documentation for the due dates in question may be exempted from the late penalty but are still required to complete assigned work.

Other demands for a student’s time such as other courses, extra-curricular activities or work commitments cannot constitute a valid reason for requests for extensions.