

Winter Study – SPEC 21

The Psychology of the Workplace – A Field Study

Course Description *(from the catalog)*

Field experience is a critical component of the decision to enter a profession. Through this field study, students can clarify their understanding of the rewards and challenges that accompany the practice of many different aspects within a profession, and understand the psychology of the workplace. Field placements are arranged in two distinct ways: some students live on campus and are matched with a local professional, while others make independent arrangements to work with a distant professional. The expectation is that each student will observe some aspect of the profession for the better part of the day, five days per week. It is also expected that the instructor will assign a specific project to be completed within the 3–week duration of the course depending upon appropriateness.

Participation in this winter study will require the student to quickly assess the work environment, make inferences about corporate culture, performance norms and expectations, and to take initiative not only to learn from this experience, but also to contribute where and when appropriate. Understanding the dynamics within a work environment is critical to success in any organization and this hands-on experience will illuminate lessons learned in the classroom. Upon completion of the winter study, it is expected that the student write a thorough report evaluating and interpreting the experience.

Requirements: It is expected that students will complete assigned readings, keep a daily journal, and write a *5–page expository review* and evaluation that will become public record as a resource for other students. Finally, the student will be expected to create a 20–minute PowerPoint presentation on his/her experience due at the end of Winter Study. If possible the student will make a presentation to fellow students at some time during the spring semester.

Prerequisites: interested students must attend an information meeting in early October. Preference for placements will be given on demonstrated interest in the sponsor’s profession.

Enrollment limit: 30.

Cost to student: if the field placement is off campus, the student will be responsible for transportation and living expenses at the field site. Students may apply for a rebate on their January meal plan; those on financial aid may approach the Financial Aid Office for additional assistance for travel expenses.

Meeting time: The expectation is that each student will be in the field to observe some aspect of the profession for the better part of the day, five days per week. In addition to observation there may be an opportunity to work on distinct projects generated by the instructor depending upon appropriateness.

JOHN NOBLE, Director of Career Counseling
Dean’s Office (Sponsor)

Course Syllabus

Outline of Requirements

1. Application: students may apply to as many of the individual placements as they wish, however, they must prepare separate applications for each because each opportunity may require unique components. Please read each description carefully to determine what is required.
2. Deadline: **all application materials must be submitted on-line by e-mail by October 19th, 5pm**, to John Noble at the Office of Career Counseling (jnoble@williams.edu). Please attach each piece of the application as a separate document **in PDF format**.
3. Students are responsible for all costs necessary for completing the course, including travel to the site location, costs of food and accommodations, and any commuting costs. Those students receiving financial aid from the College are eligible for some assistance and should check with the Financial Aid Office for details.
4. Required reading: *Working* by Studs Terkel, New Press, 2004 ed.
5. Required writing: minimum 5-page expository piece on your experience during the course, what you learned about the profession, and what you learned about yourself – whether or not you see yourself pursuing this profession in the future explaining why or why not; and a 20-minute PowerPoint presentation on the experience -- to be presented, if possible, during Spring Semester at the OCC for other students’ edification. Both are due: Friday, January 29th, 5pm.

Acceptance

Acceptance into the course will be determined as a result of the review of your application by the alum/parent sponsor and a possible telephone interview. Determination of acceptance will be made as soon as possible after the application deadline and, in most cases, before the Oct 25th registration deadline.

However, you may not know of your status until after the registration deadline for the course. In other words, you may want to *apply* to this course, but *register* for an alternative course, then wait to hear about your status for this course.

Selection into the course comes as a final decision from the alum/parent sponsor and will be based solely on his or her evaluation of your application materials and any interview that may take place. Seniority by class will be only one factor.

Placements

Each placement represents an agreement between Williams College and the sponsor to provide a shadowing experience along with specific work tasks and/or work experience. In many cases, specific work assignments cannot be determined far ahead of time, so descriptions may be somewhat general. If a student should have an independently arranged career shadowing opportunity that fits the spirit of this course, he/she may present that proposal by the above-mentioned deadline. However, students applying for one of the predetermined placements will be given priority.