National Convention Academic Seminars

Republican National Convention, Cleveland, OH
July 10–22, 2016

Democratic National Convention, Philadelphia, PA
July 17–29, 2016
The Washington Center believes that the right academic experience can transform a student’s life. These experiences can be gained from our National Political Convention academic seminars. Our academic seminars offer a unique perspective into the political process of the United States, providing students an unrivaled opportunity for learning, the ability to gain hands-on experience at a national event and the chance to network and interact with well-known political officials. We invite you and your students to join us for the 2016 National Political Convention academic seminars— the only program of its size, scope and visibility at the collegiate level.

Program Structure
In the summer of 2016, the host cities of Cleveland and Philadelphia will become our living classrooms. During each program, students will have the opportunity to experience a convention from behind the scenes and witness democracy in action at both the grassroots and national levels.

Setting the Stage for Learning
During the first week, students experience the excitement of convention preparations while getting acquainted with the host city and the key venues. They learn how the convention comes together and how other events held throughout the city contribute to the main event. Academic topics include the history of U.S. political campaigns and conventions, the nomination process, convention planning and procedures, party organizations, campaign finance and media coverage. The Washington Center works closely with both political parties to identify opportunities for tours of the convention center, invitations to exclusive events and more.

Experiencing the Convention
During the week of the convention, students engage as participant observers, reflecting on each day’s events and critically analyzing what happened. Discussion topics include the keynote address, platform, party factions, selection of the presidential and vice presidential nominees, campaign issues and strategies and relevant races occurring during the election cycle.

“TWC’s convention program offers students an immersion into politics that they cannot get anywhere else. The ability to hear from analysts, political figures and journalists is a crash course in politics that makes the students more attuned to and knowledgeable about the process. Their fieldwork opens doors to longer internship or professional opportunities once they graduate. Summing it up, TWC’s two-week convention programs can play meaningful and lifelong roles in a young adult’s life.”

– Anthony Moretti, Robert Morris University
**Program Components**

**Introduction and Overview**

The faculty director launches the program with an intensive introduction to the current state of the presidential campaign. In addition, The Washington Center orients students to the logistics of the convention sites and the host city, including important safety and security procedures.

**Speakers/Briefings/Panel Discussions**

Students encounter a diverse set of viewpoints as they hear from notable current and former public and party officials, members of the media, campaign professionals, policy experts, corporate representatives and others. These sessions include interactive question-and-answer with the speakers.

**Small Group Meetings**

Students meet regularly with experienced faculty in small groups to discuss presentations, the convention proceedings, assigned readings and related topics. In this setting, students also learn collaboratively by sharing perspectives, opinions and personal observations of convention-related events.

**Fieldwork**

Through fieldwork assignments, students contribute to the convention in a variety of ways. Placements range widely, from media and advocacy groups to host committees and state delegations. Past students have conducted interviews, prepared for events, met VIPs and supported the convention from behind the scenes. Sample placements from 2012 can be found on the sidebar.

**Convention-Related Events and Activities**

Students will attend a variety of sessions organized by the parties, host committees and other interest groups. These typically include workshops, issue forums, press conferences, committee hearings, welcome rallies and youth-focused programs. Detailed information, including past schedules, can be provided upon request. Please contact Campaign2016@twc.edu.

**Faculty Participation**

Faculty leaders work with small groups of 10 to 15 students for the duration of the program. They guide discussion and serve as advisors, facilitators and supervisors for the seminar participants. They are also responsible for providing recommended grades that are sent to the students’ home institutions. Faculty leaders are hired on a competitive basis. TWC academic seminars can be a great professional development opportunity for faculty members who participate.

“This direct exposure to the process and political players greatly enhances student understanding of the related course materials in political science courses. It helped students gain more confidence in their individual potential and broadened their scope with regard to their career choices. This experience ignited my students to assume leadership positions on campus and honed their skills to better serve their community campus.”

— Dr. Kimberly Adams, Associate Professor of Political Science, East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania

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**Communications Sample Fieldwork Placements from 2012**

- CNN
- Dallas Morning News
- Fox News
- MSNBC
- The National Journal
- Talk Radio News Service
- Voice of America
- Foreign Press Service
- New York Post

**Political Science Sample Fieldwork Placements from 2012**

- Democratic Convention Committee
- International Republican Institute
- Host Committee
- National Women’s Political Caucus
- National Democratic Institute
- Republican Committee on Arrangements
- State Delegations
Learn more about our National Convention Academic Seminars at www.twc.edu/seminars