

JAMES MADISON COLLEGE MC 400/401: Field Experience

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OVERVIEW

The James Madison Field Experience program enables you to strengthen your liberal arts education in the social sciences and public affairs by engaging in experiential learning – accompanied by analytical reflection on such learning under faculty guidance. Students who take Field Experience gain work experience and skills, encounter opportunities to test academic knowledge in working environments, and increase their knowledge about potential careers. The College believes strongly in the value of combining liberal arts and practical education. The Field Experience provides you the opportunity to apply the knowledge you have learned in the classroom to a practical experience. While in the "experience" you continue learning, only in a less academically structured setting. Three points about your Field Experience are important:

- 1) **You must be active in the learning process.** Experiential learning is active learning and you will need to push yourself through the learning stages with which you are less comfortable. You may enjoy the activity of your internship, but you may have to discipline yourself to sit back and reflect on what you are doing in order to insure that you really learn from it, that you know what you are learning, and that what you learn includes what you want to learn;
- 2) **You, the learner, are the one who determines what you want to learn.** Internships enable you to create your own curriculum. You have to give your experience focus in order not to be overwhelmed by the amount and variety of data and phenomena to absorb. Your experience, your supervisor, your faculty reader, co-workers, other interns, etc. are learning resources to be tapped thoughtfully and carefully;
- 3) **You become more conscious of what you learn and how to learn it.** If you are engaged in active learning responsibility for what and how you learn, you will need to monitor it continually and evaluate the progress you make toward achieving your learning and accomplishing goals for your internship while you are on the job.

➤ To view the Field Experience criteria, visit the [JMC Field Experience Guide](#).

Textbooks and Course Materials: No required texts.

Course Structure: Hands-on learning and assignments as directed by the student's internship supervisor and the field experience coordinator. As this course is designed like an independent study, students and their internship supervisor will determine meeting schedule together. All due dates for course assignments (see below) are set by the field experience coordinator/instructor. Projects must be completed by the last day of finals week or as approved by the instructor.

Grading: Both MC 400 & MC 401 are graded as Pass(P)/No Pass (N).

Late Work Policy: Only accepted by approval of the instructor. Students must ask in writing for extensions before previously agreed-upon deadlines.

Learning Objectives:

The primary learning objectives for these courses are:

- Gain practical knowledge, skills, and experience in a relevant work environment.
- Explore potential career opportunities and expand professional network.
- Develop personalized learning objectives relevant to individual students' personal and professional interests and goals.
- Analyze policy or legal issues related to the internship.
- Research topics related to the internship.
- Produce an artifact from the analysis and research conducted about the internship.

Course Policies, Practices, and Institutional Resources

Students are expected to adhere to the policies of Michigan State University whether noted in this syllabus or not. Instructors have the right to add or adjust policies within limits for the specifics of their courses. While the below may appear to be common policy boilerplate, there may be nuances or course specifics within it that the student must be aware of and adhere to.

Applicable policies, syllabus statements, and resources for students:

- [Spartan Code of Honor](#)
- [Mental Health](#)
- [Religious Observance Policy](#)
- [Student Athletes](#)

Commit to Integrity: Academic Honesty

Article 2.III.B.2 of the [Academic Rights and Responsibilities](#) states, "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." In addition, *James Madison College* adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in [General Student Regulations](#) 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades; the [all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations](#). See [Spartan Life Online](#) (splife.studentlife.msu.edu) and/or the [MSU Web site](#) (msu.edu).

Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, lab work, quizzes, tests and exams, without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit coursework you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Also, you are not authorized to use the [www.allmsu.com](#) Web site to complete any coursework in this course. Students who violate MSU academic integrity rules may receive a penalty grade, including a failing grade on the assignment or in the course. Contact your instructor if you need clarification on the appropriateness of your coursework. (See also the [Academic Integrity webpage](#).)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Course Policy

This is a course where you get out what you put in. Assignments are reflective in nature, and personalized to you and your experience. Therefore, you are strongly discouraged from using AI to complete the assignments. It may provide a shortcut, but I promise you that you will spend more time prompting and revising the results than if you spend the time thinking and writing about your

experiences. AI responses to the assignments in this course are vague, boring, and entirely a waste of your time and mine. However, if you decide to use these tools to complete these assignments, that is your decision. But I encourage you to carefully consider what you are trading off.

Limits to Confidentiality: Essays, journals, and other materials submitted for this class are generally considered confidential under the University's student record policies. However, students should be aware that University employees, including instructors, may be unable to maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to report specific issues to protect the health and safety of MSU community members and others. As the instructor, I must report the following information to other University offices (including the Department of Police and Public Safety) if you share it with me:

- Suspected child abuse/neglect, even if this maltreatment happened when you were a child,
- Allegations of sexual assault or sexual harassment when they involve MSU students, faculty, or staff, and
- Credible threats of harm to oneself or others.

These reports may trigger contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared. In almost all cases, whether you wish to speak with that individual will be your decision. If you would like to talk about these events more confidentially, you are encouraged to make an appointment with the MSU Counseling Center.

Inform Your Instructor of Any Accommodations Needed: [From the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities](#) (RCPD): Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services, and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued an Accommodations Letter. Please present this letter to me at the start of the term and/or two weeks before the accommodation date (test, project, etc.). Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.

Drops and Adds: The last day to add this course is the end of the first week of classes or as designated in the Academic Calendar.

Commercialized Lecture Notes: The Code of Teaching Responsibility requires instructors who permit students to commercialize their class lecture notes to include a statement in their course syllabi that gives such permission. Absent such consent, students may not do so.

Disruptive Behavior: Article 2.III.B.4 of [Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) for Students at Michigan State University states: "The student's behavior in the classroom shall be conducive to the teaching and learning process for all concerned." Article 2.III.B.10 states that "The student and the faculty share the responsibility for maintaining professional relationships based on mutual trust and civility." [General Student Regulation 5.02](#) states: "No student shall . . . obstruct, disrupt, or interfere with the functions, services, or directives of the University, its offices, or its employees (e.g., classes, social, cultural, and athletic events, computing services, registration, housing and food services,

governance meetings, and hearings).” Students whose conduct adversely affects the learning environment may be subject to disciplinary action through the Student Judicial Affairs office.

Attendance: As needed by the student. [University Attendance Policy](#) (in part): Students whose names do not appear on the official class list for this course may not attend this class. Students who fail to attend the first four class sessions or class by the fifth day of the semester, whichever occurs first, may be dropped from the course.

Participation: Communication and participation will be determined in consultation with the instructor.

Complete Assignments: Assignments for this course will be submitted electronically through email unless otherwise instructed. Assignments must be submitted by the given deadline, or special permission must be requested from the instructor before the due date. Extensions will not be granted beyond the next assignment except under extreme circumstances and approved by the instructor.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR MC 400 (5 - 9 credits)

All requirements for MC 400 are evaluated by the Field Experience Coordinator. Failure to complete all components may result in failing the course.

EVALUATION of MC 400: A Pass (P)/No Pass (N) grade will be determined by satisfactory completion of required written work and successful completion of the internship. Assignments are allocated different point values, totaling 100 possible points for the course. In order to meet satisfactory completion and pass the course, you must achieve 75 or more points by completing required assignments.

A “N” grade in MC 400 *requires* re-enrollment for the course and completion of its related requirements.

All written assignments should be double-spaced, one-inch margins, and Times New Roman size 12, Garamond size 12, or Calibri size 11 font.

1. **Mandatory Orientation Class (10 points).** Students must attend a mandatory 1-hour orientation class (on zoom) in the first week of the semester. The same class will be offered on different days and times during that first week to accommodate students’ schedules. Students must attend one of these sessions. If none of the offered sessions fit the students’ schedule, they must contact the Field Experience Coordinator for alternative ways to fulfill the mandatory orientation. See the course’s D2L page for the zoom links and the dates/times of the sessions.

2. **Satisfactory Performance (in internship) & Supervisor Evaluation (20 points).** The time expectation for MC 400 (9 credits, full-time option) is 32-40 hours per week for approximately 12-14 weeks (approx. 350 hours total). The time expectation for MC 400 (5 credits, part-time option) is 15-20 hours per week for approximately 12-14 weeks (approx. 175 hours total). For other credit amounts, consult with the Field Experience Coordinator. The internship supervisor will be asked to evaluate the intern's performance near the end of the internship. To pass MC 400, the Field Experience Coordinator must find the intern's performance satisfactory based in part on the supervisor's evaluation. Therefore, know and follow these expectations:

- Be on time, be dependable, call in if you are sick. You are expected to be there every day, for the hours you have agreed upon. If you have a legitimate and appropriate reason to need some hours or a day off - ASK (don't tell) your supervisor well in advance.
- Dress appropriately and professionally (If you need access to professional attire, check out [MSU Career Services Career Closet](#)).
- Be polite and considerate - you are there to learn - from your supervisor and co-workers.
- Ask questions if you don't understand something.
- If you have difficulties with your Field Experience talk with your supervisor right away and contact the Field Experience Coordinator. Problems can be resolved if we work on them together.

3. **Learning Contract (20 points) & Internship Information Form (10 points).** The Learning Contract is essential in developing a mutual understanding and agreement between intern and supervisor about the responsibilities, supervision, and evaluation of your internship. Complete the Learning Contract *in consultation* with your internship supervisor. Upload the completed Learning Contract to the course D2L.

The Internship Information Form is a google form (link available on D2L) where you input information about your internship and contact information for your supervisor. Supervisor's contact information will be used for the evaluation survey, so it is important to be **accurate** with their email address and name.

4. **Critical Incident Journal Entries (30 points)** You will write 10 journal entries (3 points per entries) throughout the semester where you describe and critically analyze a significant incident or experience at your internship and reflect on what you are taking away from that experience. You will upload entries regularly to the due dates listed on D2L. Each entry should be a 250-300 words.

In addition to the general entry prompt described above, the following are some additional prompts you may use or respond to when crafting your journal entry:

- Identify any challenges or obstacles encountered during the initial weeks of the internship.
How did you approach these challenges, and what strategies did you use to overcome them?
- Describe your first impressions of the workplace environment, colleagues, and supervisor.
How will these first impressions shape your behavior moving forward?
- Has someone provided you with positive feedback? What was it? How did it make you feel?
- Think about your internship thus far. Which projects or tasks have given you a sense of accomplishment? What skills/competencies have you built upon?
- Did you learn new skills or technologies? What are they and how might they help you in your future career path?
- What were the different management/leadership styles you've observed? Are there any styles that you may want to embody down the road in your career path?
- How is the workplace organized (staff roles, in-person/hybrid/remote, hierarchies)? What do you like about it? What don't you?
- Did you make any major mistakes or blunders that you hope to avoid in the future? What might you do differently next time?
- Evaluate your time management skills and productivity level at this point in the internship.
How have you prioritized tasks and managed competing deadlines? What can you do to improve your time management skills?
- How have current events affected your experience at the internship?
- How have you expanded your professional network and built relationships within the organization? Who will you stay in contact with after the conclusion of the internship and why?

5. Final Reflection Paper (10 points). This requires a **minimum 3 full-page paper**. In this paper, you will a.) reflect on and analyze the entire internship experience and its relationship to your learning objectives, b.) the highlights or lowlights you experienced and what you learned from those experiences, c.) how the internship relates to the overall JMC and University curriculum, and d.) any impacts this experience has had on your future plans and career goals.

MC 400 Due Dates

Week of Jan. 12, 2026	Begin Field Experience; attend mandatory zoom session (see D2L for links and date/time options)
Jan. 23, 2026*	Complete and sign the Learning Contract & Internship Information Form and upload to D2L (<i>*due approx. 1-2 weeks after start date</i>).
Mondays starting Feb. 2, 2026	Critical Journal Entries due (every Monday except spring break)
<u>April 27, 2026</u>	Final Reflection Paper due Supervisor Evaluations due

Extensions for most assignments will be granted as long as they are requested in advance. The exception is for assignments due on April 27, as I am unable to grant extensions in order to complete grades by the university's deadline.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR MC 401 (3 credits)

All requirements for MC 401 are evaluated by the assigned faculty reader.

AS THERE IS NO D2L FOR MC 401, YOU MUST COMMUNICATE VIA EMAIL OR IN PERSON WITH YOUR READER.

EVALUATION OF MC 401: A P/N grade is determined by satisfactory completion of a research paper (**minimum of 18-20 pages in length**) or substantial research project mutually agreed upon by the student and the faculty reader. Students may, upon request, receive an extension for MC 401 into the semester following enrollment to ensure they have the duration of the internship to gather information and select a suitable research topic. If such extensions are granted, they should abide by due dates for subsequent semester (see due dates below). If students are graduating in the semester in which they are completing their internship, or they are intending to complete MC 401 in the semester in which they are enrolled in the course, they should immediately let their faculty reader know so due dates can be adjusted.

NOTE: A "N" grade in MC 401 *requires* the student to re-enroll for the course and complete the research project.

Important Notes

1. Discuss the Field Experience internship, the organization, and the potential direction of the project with the faculty reader as early as possible. Discuss arrangements for continuing contact throughout the internship and the semester in which you are completing MC 401. This is extremely important.
2. Due dates:
 - a. Meet with MC 401 reader, and return signed Student-Reader Planning Sheet to FE Office, *****Complete within first 2 weeks of semester in which completing MC 401 (Spring: January 23; Fall: September 4)***
 - b. 1st draft of project –February 23, 2026 (completing SS26) *or* October 12, 2026 (if enrolling in MC 401 in FS26)
 - c. Final Project – April 13, 2026 (if completing SS26) *or* November 30, 2026 (if enrolling in MC 401 in FS26)

****Please note: due dates above are suggested and can be modified by or in conversation with the faculty-reader.**

THE MC 401 FIELD EXPERIENCE PROJECT

1. You must submit a draft or initial version of the MC 401 project by **February 23, 2026 (completing SS26) *or* October 12, 2026 (if enrolling in MC 401 in FS26)** depending on which track you are on, or before, based on the deadlines set by the individual faculty reader. **Projects must be submitted ELECTRONICALLY, with copies both to your faculty reader AND to the Field Experience Office (CC jmcfeo@msu.edu or michal34@msu.edu on your submission).** You will be notified by your reader if revisions are required, and if so, of the due date for a revised draft. You should expect to revise the project. Guidelines are below.
2. The final version of the project is due by **April 13, 2026 (if completing SS26) *or* November 30, 2026 (if enrolling in MC 401 in FS26).**
3. The above deadlines are enforced, whether or not you are currently enrolled. In fact, Part II of the "Student-Reader Planning Sheet" asks the student to sign a statement acknowledging these deadlines and agreeing to abide by them. **The faculty reader is under no obligation to extend these deadlines or to continue to work with any student who fails to adhere to them.** A student's failure to meet these deadlines, then, is just as serious as failure to show up for a final exam.
4. Should the revised project still not be satisfactory, the faculty reader may decide to extend the deadline for additional revision. The faculty reader will inform the Field Experience Office of the new deadline.
5. FAILURE TO MEET THE DEADLINES WILL RESULT IN AN "N" (NO-CREDIT) GRADE FOR MC 401 AND WILL REQUIRE RE-ENROLLMENT IN MC 401 AND COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT IN ORDER TO GRADUATE FROM JAMES MADISON COLLEGE.

6. REMEMBER - 3 CREDITS FOR MC 401 WILL NOT BE AWARDED UNTIL THE PROJECT IS ACCEPTED BY THE FIELD EXPERIENCE FACULTY READER. PLANS TO GRADUATE, ATTEND GRADUATE OR LAW SCHOOL, AND SEEK EMPLOYMENT SHOULD TAKE THIS FACT INTO CONSIDERATION.

PLEASE NOTE – GRADUATION ELIGIBILITY:

Many students who do the Field Experience as the last remaining graduation requirement have questions about their graduation date – whether they will officially "graduate" in the semester in which they complete their Field Experience or in the semester during which they complete their project. The official university policy dictates that a student is considered a graduate in the semester in which all of the required work is submitted. Therefore, the student will be considered a graduate in the semester corresponding to the date on which the final version of the project was submitted. The final version is considered to be the one that is approved by the faculty reader and is determined after it has been approved.

PROJECT GUIDELINES

The Field Experience Project is a major research or analytic assignment, the focus of which is chosen in consultation with the faculty advisor. If a research paper is selected, it should be approximately 18-20 pages in length. Alternatively, the faculty reader and the student can design a project or assignments that are relevant to the internship, the organization, and the student's interests. Whichever path is chosen, the project(s) should draw on your enhanced understanding and knowledge derived from the Field Experience but should go beyond the particulars of the experience.

You should work closely with your MC 401 faculty reader to identify and consider potential MC 401 research topics. For example, broad topics may include an analysis of a key problem of the organization, research on an issue related to the organization, or a topic agreed upon by the faculty reader and student. **The advice and counsel of your Madison faculty reader will play a key role in how you formulate and complete the project – communication while completing MC 401 is absolutely critical.**

The MC 400 assignment will be made available in electronic form to your MC 401 reader. The MC 401 project should thus not reiterate materials already covered by the MC 400 assignment.