Political Science

Contact Information

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- Political Science (p. 1)

Departmental Goals and Objectives

The M.A. degree program is designed to join the basic theoretical pursuits of Political Science with the practical knowledge needed by effective public officials and political practitioners. The campus' location in the state capital offers a rich setting for combining theory and practice.

The Political Science Department offers thorough academic instruction in American state and national politics, public law, international relations, comparative government, and political philosophy. Department faculty augment their academic specialties with a great variety of professional and political experiences. The faculty encourage students to take full advantage of the academic and professional opportunities offered by University of Illinois Springfield and the state capital.

The M.A. degree curriculum is organized to meet the needs of a diverse student body, offering graduate students the option to take a course of study that merges the academic and practical aspects of politics. Because students enter the major with bachelor's degrees in a variety of social sciences and humanities, the M.A. curriculum is centered in several required courses that provide essential concepts and skills. For that reason, all students who have not taken an undergraduate research methods course are required to take PSC 451 to prepare them in research and quantitative methods. If PSC 451 is stipulated as a condition of your admission to the program, it will count as a 400-level elective in the degree. It is not a prerequisite. A range of options in subject-matter seminars, elective courses, and internships allow students to tailor their courses of study to their academic interests and professional aspirations.

The department is particularly well organized for students who want to pursue careers in practical politics at the state level, in agencies involved in international policy making, for those who are preparing to teach, and for those who aspire to an advanced degree in Political Science or Law.

The Political Science curriculum ensures that competence is coupled with understanding. Courses examine political concepts and processes, historic changes in political structures, and the larger human meaning of competence in the areas of electoral and legislative systems, law and civil liberties, political philosophy, international relations, and comparative politics.

Students with sharply focused interests in a particular sub-field of the discipline are able to organize their electives into areas of emphasis. Also, students are encouraged to seek appropriate instruction from faculty in public administration, economics, legal studies, and women and gender studies, among other areas.

This field is important to students who are seeking teaching careers at the secondary, community college, or university level, or who plan to study toward the doctorate. Sound academic course work and the hands-on experience are both important Political Science experiences for in-service teachers and for those preparing to teach. Interested students can combine course work in several sub-fields of interest including world politics, American government, Illinois history and government, and other aspects of civic education. Students may also arrange special teaching internships.

Graduate students in Political Science may also shape their M.A. programs to the special requirements of advanced degrees. Students who anticipate entering law school can tailor a program that draws on the resources of Legal Studies. For those interested in pursuing a Ph.D. in Political Science, the subject matter seminars offer graduate preparation in the standard fields required for doctoral study.

For those interested in international affairs and comparative politics, the department offers a special combination of courses and practice-related experiences. Internships are available in agencies of Illinois government that have international policies and programs. Because Political Science is a part of the campus' interdisciplinary committee on international studies, students are encouraged to take courses on international subjects in several academic departments.

The Master's Degree

To earn the Master of Arts in Political Science, students must complete aa minimum of 40 semester hours of course work with a required 28-hour minimum of 500-level courses.

Advising

On admission to the program, students are assigned an initial advisor. After a semester a student may select his or her permanent academic advisor. This faculty member can assist the student with closure committee formation and closure guidance, as a supervisor for internships and practice units, and academic counselor in devising an appropriate program of study. The advisor also monitors student progress in satisfying the requirements of the degree.

Communication Skills

Successful performance in practical politics and political science requires ability to write and speak persuasively and to present sophisticated information and complex subject matter directly and plausibly. Completion of PSC 501 will verify satisfaction of the communication skills requirement.

Electives

1. A maximum of eight hours of internship may be applied toward the degree as elective hours. Students may apply credits earned from the Graduate Public Service Internship (PAD 580: Public Administration Internship Seminar), the Illinois Legislative Staff Internships (PSC 526 ILSIP: Internship), or from PSC 530: Graduate Internship in Political Science for elective hours.
2. At least 16 of the 28 elective hours should be 500-level PSC courses. A maximum of eight hours outside of PSC may be taken.
3. Up to 12 hours of 400-level courses can be taken for graduate credit.

Grading Policy

Students must have a grade average of B to qualify for the degree. A maximum of eight hours of C (2.0) grades is applicable to the degree

(grades of C- or lower are not accepted), provided that a minimum GPA of 3.0 is reached at time of graduation and an approved Student Petition is on file in the Office of Records and Registration.

In no circumstances, however, may a grade lower than B in PSC 501 be counted toward the degree. For students choosing the CR/NC option, a CR represents work equivalent to B, meaning that grades of CR may be counted toward the master's degree. Students also should refer to the campus policy on Grades Acceptable Toward Master's Degrees section of this catalog.

Program Learning Outcomes

The Political Science curriculum ensures that competence is coupled with understanding. Courses examine political concepts and processes, historic changes in political structures, and the larger human meaning of competence in the areas of electoral and legislative systems, law and civil liberties, political philosophy, international relations, and comparative politics.

Students with sharply focused interests in a particular sub-field of the discipline are able to organize their electives into areas of emphasis. Also, students are encouraged to seek appropriate instruction from faculty in public administration, economics, legal studies, and women and gender studies, among other areas.

1. Ability to apply theoretical perspectives to analyze the purpose and functioning of public institutions, policy-making processes, and political behavior in the state, national, or international context.
2. Ability to design, conduct, and present research employing valid and reliable analytical techniques to explain political phenomena.
3. Competency to seek and/or participate in real-world opportunities to test political theories and integrate academic knowledge with practical experience.

Requirements

Core Courses		
PSC 501	Introduction to the Graduate Study of Politics	4
PSC 502	Methods Of Inquiry	4
Electives		**28**
Closure		
PSC 590	Closure Exercise	4
Select one:		
Comprehensive Examination		
Thesis		
Participant/Observer Case Study		
Total Hours		**40**

Master's Closure

Students who take PSC 590 and do not complete it must register for PSC 591 (zero credit hours, one billable hour) each subsequent fall and spring until the closure is complete.

ONLINE

The online Political Science Master's Degree is designed to meet the needs of working professionals from diverse academic backgrounds. The Political Science Master's Degree Programs allows students to tailor their courses of study to their individual research interests and professional aspirations.

- Political Science (p. 1)