

Handbook for Graduate Students in Doctor of Philosophy Program in Political Science

Program Overview

The PhD program in Political Science, with a focus on Global Studies, emphasizes intensive study in the areas of Comparative Politics and International Relations. In addition, students are exposed to the other two major subfields within the discipline, Political Theory and American Politics. Beyond mastering the substantive content in these subfields and developing their own research agendas, students are expected to develop a strong understanding of the tools and approaches central to the scientific study of politics. The program requires students to complete 60 credits beyond the Bachelor of Arts or 42 credits beyond the Master of Arts. The program seeks to prepare students for both academic and non-academic careers. The former includes academic positions at colleges and universities, and the latter includes employment with public, private, and non-profit organizations and institutions. It is expected that the students will complete the program in five to six years.

Academic Integrity

The Department of Political Science has high expectations of its students, among which are adherence to standards of integrity. Students are expected to do their own work, oral and written, honestly. To this end, students should be familiar with the statement on the subject in the Graduate Catalog.

UNLV also requires all members of the university community to be familiar with the honor code and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. Students are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. UNLV will neither protect nor defend students nor assume any responsibility for violations of fair use laws. To familiarize yourself with copyright and fair use policies, visit the UNLV copyright Web page <<http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright>>.

One aspect of integrity is providing adequate citations in written work. The department does not have one required format for citations, although professors may impose such a requirement in their courses. If the professor does not do so, students should use a method specified in a style book (e.g., Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*) or make use of the *Style Manual for Political Science*, which is available from the American Political Science Association.

Degree Requirements

Students may take courses in the following areas: topic courses in Comparative Politics, area studies courses in Comparative Politics, courses in International Relations, Political Theory, and American Politics (including public law and public policy). Completion of the program requires a minimum of 60 credits beyond the BA or 42 credits beyond the MA (in the latter case, the department will determine the distribution of the 42 credits, based on the student's transcripts of prior work). In the former case, the 60 credits are to be distributed as follows:

- a. Core curriculum (at least 18 credits)
 - (i) Methods in political science (six credits)
 - (ii) Foreign language: Students must demonstrate knowledge of the equivalent of two years of a single foreign language through either an examination or 12 credits of college-level course work (such credits do not count toward the required total) prior to admission to candidacy.
 - (iii) Proseminars (12 credits): Comparative Politics, International Relations, Political Theory, and American Politics.
- b. Major field (nine credits, not including proseminars): either Comparative Politics or International Relations.

(i) If Comparative Politics is chosen, then students are required to take at least one course in the area of Topic Courses in Comparative Politics and one course from the area of Area Studies Courses in Comparative Politics, and three courses overall.

c. Minor field #1 (six credits, not including proseminars): either Comparative Politics or International Relations (whichever is not the major field).

(i) If Comparative Politics is chosen, then students are required to take one course from the area of Topic Courses in Comparative Politics and one course in the area of Area Studies Courses in Comparative Politics.

d. Minor field #2 (six credits, not including proseminars): either Political Theory or American Politics.

(i) If Political Theory is chosen, then students must take one course that includes pre-modern political theory (i.e., pre-1500) and one course that includes modern political theory (i.e., post-1500).

(ii) If American politics is chosen, then students must take one course from two of three subfields (American Political Institutions, American Political Behavior, or American Public Policy).

e. Electives (nine credits):

(i) A maximum of six credits outside the department, which must be at the 700-level (courses in Ethics and Policy Studies are considered to be departmental courses).

(ii) A maximum of six credits of independent study addressing a topic of interest to students that is not covered by other courses in the program and for which students are able to find a professor willing to oversee their efforts. Specifically, students and the sponsoring faculty member are responsible for drawing up a schedule of reading and writing assignments and list them on the Graduate Independent Study form (available from the department's Web site). Independent studies can be taken for one, two, or three credits; the amount of work for a three-credit independent study should be the same as that for a graduate seminar (approximately six books read and thirty pages written), with the amount of work for fewer credits reduced proportionately. The professor determines the number and length of writing assignments.

f. Dissertation (12 credits; more credits may be taken, but only 12 units will count toward degree).

Other Requirements

GPA Requirement

Students must maintain a minimum grade point average of 3.0 for all course work. No course in which a student makes a grade below B will count toward the degree. The only exceptions to this are foreign language courses, in which no grade below B- will satisfy the requirement.

Advisor and Advisory Committee

An Advisory Committee consisting of three faculty members from the department and one faculty representative of the Graduate College (until students have formed their Advisory Committee, the Graduate Coordinator acts as students' temporary advisor). One of the three departmental members serves as chair and, from that point, as the primary advisor. The chair of the Advisory Committee should be a faculty member from the student's major field.

With the Advisory Committee's approval and that of the Graduate Coordinator, students establish a program of study for their remaining credits: major field, minor fields, and electives.

Comprehensive Written and Oral Examinations

After completion of course work, students are required to pass comprehensive written and oral examinations. The written component is divided into two parts corresponding to the student's major field and two minor fields. Within those fields the content of the examinations is determined by students' program of study as approved by their Advisory Committee. Students need to have a passing grade on each essay. Students have two opportunities to pass the comprehensive examinations. Each failed essay may be retaken only once; passing essays need not be retaken.

After passage of the written component, students then advance to the oral examination. The oral examination is normally held four days after completion of the written portion. Students are responsible for arranging a location, date, and time at which all committee members may attend.

Dissertation

After all of the above have been completed, students are required to complete a dissertation of substantial length containing original research and interpretation on a topic in the field of Comparative Politics or International Relations. In consultation with their advisor and other relevant faculty members, students select an appropriate topic from which a specific research question of theoretical import can be derived. After conducting preliminary research, students submit a written prospectus of three to five pages, outlining the research question, the methods used to treat the research, the organization of the dissertation project, and the significance of the study to the discipline of political science. Once students have successfully written their prospectus, they need to file the Prospectus Approval Form with the Graduate College. After doing so, students are then able to enroll for dissertation credits.

After the dissertation research is under way, each member of the Advisory Committee reads the dissertation and may require revisions. In writing the dissertation, students should follow the Guide to Preparing and Submitting a Thesis or Dissertation (available on the Graduate College's Web site); as noted above, the department has no formatting or stylistic requirements of its own, but the Advisory Committee may have such requirements. Twice a year the Graduate College holds a seminar to explain its requirements for writing a thesis/dissertation. Students are strongly encouraged to attend one of those seminars.

The dissertation must be unanimously approved by the Advisory Committee. After the dissertation has been approved, an oral defense of the thesis is held. Students are responsible for arranging a location, date, and time at which all members of the student's committee may attend. The committee may require students to make substantive or stylistic revisions, or both, to the dissertation.

When students have successfully defended the dissertation, made any necessary further revisions, had those revisions approved by the Advisory Committee, and submitted final copies to the Graduate College, students are required to give the department one copy of the dissertation, bound in black cover.

Graduate Assistantships

The information here supplements that in the Graduate Assistant Handbook (available on the Graduate College's Web site).

The number of assistantships offered by the department may vary from year to year. The number of vacancies varies from semester to semester. Selection of recipients is made by an ad hoc committee of departmental faculty. Contracts for Graduate Assistants (GAs) begin at the beginning of the week before instruction begins in a semester and end at the end of the final examination period.

Assignments held by Graduate Assistants vary from semester to semester. Assignments are normally made in the week before the contract for the semester begins. Depending upon the faculty member to whom graduate assistants are assigned, they will be either assisting faculty with teaching or research or both. Graduate Assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis and to maintain an assistantship students must remain in good standing (e.g., maintain at least a 3.0 grade point average and make continuous progress toward their degree).

The PhD Graduate Assistantship contracts may be awarded up to a maximum of three years.

Forms and Deadlines

All of the forms listed below are available on the Graduate College's or the Department of Political Science's Web sites. For an up-to-date list of deadlines, see the Graduate College's Web site.

1. Appointment of Advisory Committee.
2. Proposed Doctoral Degree Program, Parts 1 and 2 (on departments website) —after completing course work and before taking the comprehensive examinations. Any change in the proposed degree program must be submitted to the Graduate College on a Change in Proposed Degree Program Form.
3. Prospectus Approval—before enrolling for dissertation credits.
4. Advancement to Doctoral Candidacy—along with the Prospectus Approval.
5. Application for Graduation—early in the final semester of work on the dissertation.
6. Oral Defense Results—after successfully defending the dissertation.