

## Political Science Academic Learning Compact

Political science is concerned with the study of politics in many settings. It is particularly useful to students who wish to go on to government service, law, diplomacy, higher education, and work in the non-profit sector. Central to the discipline is knowledge of the government and politics of nations and their sub-units; classical and modern political philosophy; international and comparative studies; public organization and policy-making. Basic knowledge of cognate fields and methodologies is also important. Within general guidelines students have considerable flexibility in planning their studies; some concentrate on the politics of the United States, while others develop interests in other areas of the world, often creating their own interdisciplinary programs. Students are encouraged to obtain field experience through internships or other work experience with agencies of government, policy institutes, political parties, interest groups, and non-profit organizations. Those with interests in comparative politics and international relations are encouraged to spend a semester abroad.

### Requirements for graduation with an area of concentration in Political Science:

1. At least one introductory level class.
2. One class in at least three of the following subfields of Political Science.
  - a. American Politics
  - b. Comparative Politics
  - c. International Relations
  - d. Political Thought
3. A minimum of two advanced seminars (at least one each in two different subfields).
4. *Craft and Rhetoric of Political Inquiry* (a research design course recommended for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students).
5. Baccalaureate Thesis or Portfolio Project in Political Science.
6. Baccalaureate Exam and Oral Defense of Thesis or Portfolio Project.

Total course minimum: 8 classes or tutorials (not counting the thesis tutorial)

### **Highly Recommended**

1. demonstrated proficiency in statistics or logic
2. introductory work in economics, history, or sociology

**Requirements for “double” area of concentration:** Same as for “single” concentrators.

**Requirements for “slash” with Political Science listed first:** Same as for “single” concentrators.

**Requirements for “slash” with Political Science listed second:** A minimum of six courses covering at least three of the subfields listed above and including one introductory course and one advanced seminar. **NOTE:** Political Science considers a secondary “slash” to be the equivalent of a minor.

### Expected outcomes from the study of Political Science:

The Academic Learning Compact themes of content knowledge, critical thinking and communication are core components of the political science Area of Concentration.

1. Students graduating with a political science AOC are expected to demonstrate knowledge of basic political science concepts, theories and methods, in addition to specific literacy within their chosen subfield or subfields.
2. Our requirements also stress familiarity with at least two subfields outside a student’s specialty.

3. Students must demonstrate facility in applying concepts, theories, and analytical methods to social phenomena and in communicating both the process and content of their analyses to targeted audiences.

The integration of content, critical thinking and communication plays a prominent role in every political science course and in most assignments.

### **Assignments and requirements in political science classes:**

Political Science courses utilize a wide variety of assignments and techniques to develop students' content knowledge, critical thinking, and written and oral communication skills. The particular combination of assignments varies by class, as does the level of requirements in each skill area. The following are our most commonly used assignments.

1. Reading and analyzing primary and secondary literature
2. In-class essay exams
3. Literacy exams
4. Concept and/or current events quizzes
5. Take-home essay exams
6. Formulation of discussion questions based on integrating readings
7. Literature reviews
8. Critical response papers to the literature
9. Issue or case studies
10. Research proposals
11. Research papers
12. Portfolios
13. Peer or self assessments
14. General participation in class discussions
15. In-depth seminar participation
16. Discussion leadership
17. Structured in-class debates
18. Individual presentations
19. Group presentations
20. Simulation exercises
21. In-class group work
22. Data analysis exercises
23. Internet search and evaluation exercises
24. Posts to the class web board of relevant news stories or students' own commentaries
25. Oral exams

Our introductory courses focus on helping students acquire a foundation of content knowledge, develop frameworks for understanding and analyzing the field, and improve fundamental writing and oral communication skills. For intermediate courses, we emphasize more specialized and deeper content knowledge, as well as stronger analytical and critical skills and more advanced written work. Advanced seminars require heavy reading loads of difficult theoretical and empirical material, extensive integration and critique of the literature in both written and oral forms, and advanced analytical work in the form of full research papers, sophisticated research proposals, or portfolios. We design our seminars as graduate seminars in order to develop higher level skills. Below, we map the wide range of assignments that students encounter in their pursuit of a political science AOC to specific courses as well as ALC themes.

## Map of Course Assignments and Development of Targeted Skills

<b>Course</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Critical Thinking</b>	<b>Communication</b>
<b><i>Introductory Courses</i></b>			
Comparative Politics	1,4,10,14,21,22	1,10,14,21,22	10,14,21
Intro to American Politics	1,2,3,4,5,12,14	1,2,5,12,14	5,12,14
Intro to World Politics	1,2,4,6,17	1,2, 17	13, 14, 17
Survey of Classical Political Thought	1,5,14	1,5,14	5,14
Thinking Politics	1,2,4,5,6,12,21	1,4,5,12,13,21	5,14,21
<b><i>Topics Courses (Multiple Levels)</i></b>			
Expanding the E.U. and NATO	1,4,5,9,12,14	1,4,5,9,12,14	5,9,12,14
Governing the Oceans	1,2,3,6,8,18,19,20	1,2,6,8,18,19,20	14,16,18,20,24
Sustainable Development	1,2,3,4,6,9,11	1,2,6,8,9,11,17,20	11,13,14,17,20,24
Women After Communism	1,5,6,10,11,15,16,18	1,5,6,10,11,15,16,18	5,10,11,15,16,18
<b><i>Intermediate Courses</i></b>			
American Constitutional Thought I: Powers of Government	1,5,14	1,5,14	5,14
American Constitutional Thought II: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties	1,5,14	1,5,14	5,14
Craft and Rhetoric of Political Inquiry	1,4,5,7,8,10	1,4,5,7,8,10,13,14,15	13,14,15
Global Environmental Politics	1,3,5,6,8,9	1,5,6,8,9	14,16,17,20,24
Politics of China: Communism and Change	1,5,9,14,16,19,24	1,5,9,14,16,19,24	5,9,14,16,19
Politics of Congress	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,10,12,22	5,10,11
Politics of Eastern Europe	1,2,5,9,14,23	1,2,5,9,14,23	2,5,9,14
Politics of the European Union	1,4,5,9,14,18,24	1,4,5,9,14,18,24	5,9,14,18
Power and Public Policy	1,4,6,8,10,11	1,4,8,10,11,21	8,11,19,21
Russia in Transition	1,5,9,14,18,24,25	1,5,9,14,18,24,25	5,9,14,18,25
Urban Policy and Politics	1,4,6,8,10,11	1,4,8,10,11,21	8,11,19,21
<b><i>Advanced Seminars</i></b>			
Administrative State	1,5,15	1,5,15	5,15
American Political Development	1,6,7,10,14,	1,6,7,10,11	16,18
American Politics: Citizenship, Political Authority, and the Public Sphere			
International Law and Politics	1,5,6,8	1,5,6,8,11,15,16	11,15,16
Literature, History, and Politics	1,5,15	1,5,15	5,15
Modern Political Thought	1,5,15	1,5,15	5,15
Technology and Politics	1,5,15	1,5,15	5,15
Transitions to Democracy in Comparative Perspective	1,5,6,8,10,11,15,18,24	1,5,6,8,10,11,15,18,24	5,8,10,11,15,18
<b><i>Thesis Process and Tutorials</i></b>	1,7,8,10,11,12,15,25	1,7,8,10,11,12,15,25	7,8,10,11,12,15,25

### **Measures to track student progress:**

Several key elements make up the political science AOC's program for tracking student progress. At the heart of all of these efforts is the commitment of the faculty to thorough evaluation of each assignment, class, tutorial, independent reading project, independent research project and thesis work in ways that directly and cumulatively assess how students are progressing in their grasp of content, their critical reasoning and analytical skills, and their communication skills.

First, the program of classes progresses from introductory courses, to intermediate, to advanced seminar courses. Introductory courses are intended to establish core competencies in the basic factual knowledge expected of literate students of politics. The introductory class also establishes basic conceptual material both substantive and methodological (e.g., the concept of sovereignty would be an example of the former, the concept of causality and how to assess it empirically would be an example of the later). Finally, the introductory class also diagnoses each student's competency for college level communications skills in both writing and oral work. Our aim is to relate our assessments on each of these matters in written, narrative evaluation, in addition to direct oral communication with the students. Students are told explicitly whether their performances on individual assignments and overall constitute a solid basis for more advanced work, or whether additional introductory work is recommended. Students who are considering concentrating in political science thus should have clear indicators of their progress, and sponsors should have a solid basis for assessing where a student stands and what kind of course work is appropriate to follow up on introductory work.

Intermediate classes continue to work on literacy and basic skills, but demand more from students with respect to their capacity to work with theoretical and methodological tools. These classes demand much more in the way of mastery in depth of factual content. Communications skills now require more than mere competence and begin to stress the way that composition, theoretical and empirical analysis, research, and presentation must be integrated. Again, students who are considering concentrating in political science should have clear indicators of their progress, and sponsors should have a solid basis for assessing where a student stands and what kind of course work is appropriate for the next stage of study.

One flaw in our program that we are working to remedy concerns the lack of a mechanism to redirect students whom we feel lack the skills or commitment to complete a successful political science thesis. While the evaluations in classes and other circular activities are clear, there has been no intervention point for students who are doing satisfactory work to receive college credit, but are not advancing sufficiently in the discipline to truly be honors students and thus write a satisfactory thesis. We are presently planning to address this problem with a review process for admission to the concentration and will implement it when new personnel join our faculty next year.

The highest level classes assume that students have done sufficient preparatory class work in substantive areas to work at the level of very advanced undergraduates or beginning graduate students. They therefore stress critical reasoning and advanced communications in a more specialized form than other courses. Again, we rely on informal and written evaluations and review and discussion with advisors as the means for conveying to students how they are developing.

Thesis work is reviewed as it progresses by a sponsor and evaluated by a team including at least a couple of members of the discipline.

### **Measures to demonstrate each graduate's competencies:**

The metrics for assignments are determined by the instructor, often in consultation with disciplinary peers, explicitly promulgated to the students (including in the course syllabi) and discussed in detail in written evaluations. Generalization about the methods of measurement is difficult, as the table above indicates, since each assignment is carefully gauged to accomplish specific objectives, and thus involves unique standards. Our syllabi and course descriptions stress how each assignment (including participation in class discussion) relates to the specific skills and competencies we are striving to achieve.

One might describe the assessment as qualitative rather than quantitative. Rather than attempt to evaluate achievement and progress with simple, summary scores, each of our faculty members carefully dissects assignments on the criteria of content, critical thinking, and communications, and presents this evaluation to students in explicit terms. We make an effort to be explicit about how well students do according to our professional standards, how they compare to others at similar stages, and how they are progressing in specific areas. Similarly, summaries of performance discuss explicitly how students are progressing in their overall intellectual development.

The final measures used to gauge student's achievement in our program are the baccalaureate thesis and exams. Students must produce original research with a cogent and clear written analysis in their theses or portfolio projects. In the baccalaureate exam, they must demonstrate the ability to communicate their findings orally, examine their own work critically, respond to empirical and analytical questions, and apply concepts and theories from the broader field of political science. Students' success in achieving these goals is evaluated by a faculty committee of at least three members.