

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, and higher education. Central to the discipline, is knowledge of the government and politics of nations and their sub-units; political philosophy (both classical and modern) international and comparative studies; public organization and politics. Basic knowledge of cognate fields and methodologies is also important. Within general guidelines, however, students have considerable flexibility in planning their studies; some concentrate particularly on the politics of the United States, while others develop an interest in areas such as Latin America, Europe or Africa, and create their own interdisciplinary programs.

REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION WITH AN AREA OF CONCENTRATION IN POLITICAL SCIENCE:

1. At least one introductory level class.
2. Overall distribution of Political Science classes should contain at least one class in three of the following subfields.
 - a. American Politics
 - b. Comparative Politics
 - c. International Relations
 - d. Political Theory
3. A minimum of two advanced seminars (at least one each in two different subfields).
4. Research Design Workshop (recommended for 2nd and 3rd year students).
5. A introductory statistics course (Quantitative Political Analysis I recommended)
6. Senior Thesis or Portfolio Project in Political Science.
7. Baccalaureate Exam and Oral Defense of the Thesis or Portfolio Project.

Total course minimum: 9 Political Science classes or tutorials (not counting thesis tutorials), plus statistics. A single class from the Quantitative Political Analysis sequence can count towards either the statistics requirement or the political science overall class requirement, but not both.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED:

Students are recommended to take additional courses that will complement their political science concentrations. Recommended areas include courses from Economics, History, Sociology, Philosophy, Psychology, Statistics, and Computer Science.

REQUIREMENTS FOR "DOUBLE" AREA OF CONCENTRATION:

Same as for "single" concentrators

REQUIREMENTS FOR "SLASH" WITH POLITICAL SCIENCE LISTED FIRST:

Same as for "single" concentrator

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.

Students are encouraged to obtain field experience through internships or other work experience with agencies of government, political parties, interest groups, etc. In recent years, students have interned with U.S. Congressmen, the Governor of Florida, the American Civil Liberties Union, and county planning agencies. They have helped in political campaigns, handled publicity for the Sarasota Peace and Justice Center, challenged decisions of the local Airport Authority, and become radio news announcers. Occasionally, students with highly specialized interests, such as Urban Studies, plan to spend a semester at another college or university; this is encouraged when appropriate. Those with interests in comparative politics and international relations are encouraged to spend a semester abroad.

REPRESENTATIVE SENIOR THESES:

- The Moral Majority and the Interaction of Religion and Politics in America

- Islam and Politics in Egypt and Iran
- The Urban Policy of the Italian Communist Party
- Pluralism in the Defense Appropriations Process
- Small Local Governments in Florida: Mayor vs. Manager
- What Must Remain Public? Essays on Privatization, the Constitution, and Public Administration
- Race Riots in the United States: Two Explanatory Models
- Tainted Transitions: The Historical Legacy of Imperialism and the Failure of Democratization in the Caucasus

FACULTY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

Frank Alcock

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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. Students graduating with an AOC in political science are expected to display the following skills.

1. Content knowledge of basic political science concepts, theories, and methods
2. Specific literacy in one chosen subfield
3. Familiarity with at least 2 subfields outside student's specialty
4. Facility in applying concepts, theories, and analytical methods to political phenomena
5. Communicating the 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.