Political Science

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Degree Requirements
PhD in Political Science

Students in the PhD program are expected to acquire the following:

• A broad understanding of several fields of political science as a discipline
• Methodological competence sufficient to be productive professionals
• Specialized expertise in a particular field of concentration

The procedures and requirements described below are designed to facilitate the achievement of these objectives. In addition to the formal requirements stated here, we provide a list of recommendations that students should follow to succeed in the program. For a detailed year-to-year outline of requirements and recommendations, please refer to the section "Specific Requirements for Each Year in the Program" at the end of the Guide to Graduate Studies, located on the Graduate Program website (https://polisci.wustl.edu/resources/).

Exceptions to any of these requirements must be approved by the director of graduate studies (DGS) in consultation with the Graduate Committee and, as needed, the respective Field Committee.

General Course Requirements

In general, all students must successfully complete the following core courses with a grade of B or better:

• Math Camp (offered during the August before the first semester)
• Pol Sci 505 Theories of Individual and Collective Choice I (first semester)
• Pol Sci 5052 Mathematical Modeling in Political Science (first semester)
• Pol Sci 581 Quantitative Political Methodology I (second semester)
• Pol Sci 582 Quantitative Political Methodology II (third semester)
• Pol Sci 5024 Causal Inference (fourth semester)
• Pol Sci 590 Research Workshop I (fifth semester)

According to the Probation and Dismissal Policy, if a student fails to obtain a B (3.0) in one of the required courses, they will be placed on academic probation and have the opportunity to retake the course the following year. Failure to obtain a B (3.0) after taking the course for the second time will result in dismissal from the program. Furthermore, failure to obtain a B (3.0) in another required course while on probation is considered extreme underperformance and will result in dismissal from the program.

In addition to required courses, students will be taking courses in different fields. Courses are mainly concentrated during the first two years. Students should plan to take four courses (12 units) per semester during their first year and three courses (9 units) per semester during their second year.

Fields

The department divides the discipline of political science into six fields:

• American politics
• Comparative politics
• Formal theory
• International politics
• Political and social theory
• Quantitative methods

Before writing the dissertation, students must pass a qualifying evaluation (refer to next section) and fulfill requirements for certification in one major and one minor field. The major and minor field certifications are intended to ensure that students possess broad familiarity with the literature and material in the fields presented.

Field requirements are met by completing the required courses with a grade of B+ or better. A major field requires completing four courses in that field with a grade of B+ or better; a minor field requires completing three courses in that field with a grade of B+ or better.

Students are expected to complete course requirements for the major and minor by the end of their fourth semester. Exceptions can be granted by the DGS on a case-by-case basis but are not possible beyond the student’s sixth semester.

Field Requirements

American Politics

• Major: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least four graduate-level seminars in American politics, including Pol Sci 520 American Political Institutions and Pol Sci 5678 American Political Behavior.
• Minor: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least three graduate-level seminars in American politics, including Pol Sci 520 American Political Institutions and Pol Sci 5678 American Political Behavior.

Comparative Politics

• Major: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least four graduate-level seminars in comparative politics, including Pol Sci 510 Approaches to Comparative Politics.
• Minor: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least three graduate-level seminars in comparative politics, including Pol Sci 510 Approaches to Comparative Politics.

Formal Theory
• Major: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least four graduate-level seminars in formal theory, including Pol Sci 505 Theories of Individual and Collective Choice I and three other 500-level courses that require Pol Sci 505 Theories of Individual and Collective Choice I and Pol Sci 505 Theories of Individual and Collective Choice I as a prerequisite. With permission of the Formal Theory Field Committee, an appropriate 500-level economics course may be substituted.

• Minor: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least three graduate-level seminars in formal theory, including Pol Sci 505 Theories of Individual and Collective Choice I and two other 500-level courses that require Pol Sci 505 Theories of Individual and Collective Choice I as a prerequisite. With permission of the Formal Theory Field Committee, an appropriate 500-level economics course may be substituted.

**International Politics**

• Major: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least four graduate-level courses in international politics. This requirement includes the 500-level graduate sequence and 500-level political science and economics courses authorized by the International Politics Committee.

• Minor: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least three graduate-level seminars in international politics. The requirement includes the 500-level graduate sequence and 500-level political science and economics courses authorized by the International Politics Committee.

**Political and Social Theory**

• Major: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least four graduate-level courses in political theory; the theory faculty recommends at least two of the History of Political Thought courses (Pol Sci 5000 History of Political Thought I: Justice, Virtue, and the Soul, Pol Sci 5002 History of Political Thought II: Legitimacy, Equality and the Social Contract, and Pol Sci 5003 History of Political Thought III: Liberty, Democracy, and Revolution) and at least two seminars in political theory.

• Minor: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least three graduate-level courses in political theory authorized by the Political Theory Committee.

**Quantitative Methods**

• Major: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least four methods courses, including the required sequence (Pol Sci 581 Quantitative Political Methodology I and Pol Sci 582 Quantitative Political Methodology II) and additional elective methodology courses authorized by the Quantitative Methods Committee.

• Minor: Students must satisfactorily complete (with a grade of B+ or better) at least three methods courses, including the required sequence (Pol Sci 581 Quantitative Political Methodology I and Pol Sci 582 Quantitative Political Methodology II) and an additional elective methodology course authorized by the Quantitative Methods Committee.

According to the Probation and Dismissal Policy, if a student fails to meet field requirements as a result of grades or for other reasons by the end of their fourth semester, they will be placed on probation for one semester. Failure to meet the field requirements by the end of that probationary semester results in dismissal from the program.

**Qualifying Evaluations**

Each student will be evaluated at the end of each semester through their second year. These evaluations will take place at the end of their first and second semesters, the end of their first-year summer, and the end of their third and fourth semesters.

Evaluation criteria for the academic year include the following: regular classroom attendance (at least 90%), participation in departmental intellectual life (e.g., seminars, conferences, professionalization workshops), and grades (a grade of B or higher for all required courses). Grades will be particularly emphasized, and faculty of required courses will use grades as clear communication that students have mastered the course material. Each required course will include a cumulative final exam or another final assignment of a cumulative nature that will assess the student’s broad mastery of relevant materials.

At the end of their first-year summer, students must submit (a) evidence of research progress (which can consist of skill development, collaborative research, or individual research output) and (b) feedback from a faculty mentor.

The DGS will distribute a survey to all faculty to collect the necessary feedback regarding student performance and engagement. To remain in good standing, students must (a) be making good progress with respect to their course work and mentored teaching experience assignments; (b) be advancing in terms of their research trajectory, as appropriate for their stage in the program; and (c) be maintaining professional comportment with faculty, peers, and staff.

If a student fails to successfully pass any of these evaluations, they will be placed on academic probation. If the student makes significant progress during the next evaluation period and satisfactorily addresses the terms of the probation, they will be removed from probation and return to good standing. Failing to make significant progress during the next evaluation period may result in dismissal from the program.

**Third-Year Paper Requirement**

During their second and third years, each student is required to produce a solo-authored research paper. The expectation is that this paper will be in the same field as the student’s dissertation and at the level of quality for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

Students need to identify two advisors (i.e., the research paper chair and a second reader) and obtain their signatures on the Research Paper Proposal Form after taking the qualifying exam (i.e., by the end of January of their second year). In consultation with these advisors (i.e., the committee), they need to develop a research design (motivation, theory, design, data sources) by the last day of classes of the spring semester of their second year. By the end of the spring semester, the
The requirements for the completion of the dissertation are described in the general degree requirements by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, which are applicable to all Washington University doctoral candidates.

Dissertation and Defense

The requirements for the completion of the dissertation are described in the general degree requirements by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, which are applicable to all Washington University doctoral candidates.

Graduation

Students need to graduate by May of their sixth year. Failure to do so results in the student being placed on probation. The student then has a chance to finish their dissertation by August of that same year. Otherwise, they will be dismissed from the program.
Foreign Language Requirement

There is no uniform foreign language requirement set by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, or by the department. The extent and substance of foreign language competence required will be determined by the Graduate Committee in consultation with the student and their advisor.

Mentored Teaching Experience Responsibilities

Mentored Teaching Experiences (MTEs) are curricular in nature and require that students collaborate with a faculty member.

Mentored teaching responsibilities vary from course to course but, in all cases, consist of attending class and grading papers and assignments. Examples of other responsibilities include running discussion sections or reviews, disseminating course materials, and holding office hours.

Graduate students are expected to participate in the MTE for an average of 13.5 hours per week. During some weeks, the MTE will involve considerably fewer hours; during other weeks (usually around midterms and finals), it will involve considerably more hours.

Faculty are expected to set expectations for grading at the beginning of each semester, and graduate students should plan accordingly for weeks of heavier grading or other responsibilities.

According to the Probation and Dismissal Policy, poor performance in the fulfillment of mentored teaching responsibilities will result in the student being placed on probation. Lack of improvement while on probation will result in dismissal from the program.

Mentored Experience Requirement

All students need to meet the mentored experience requirement of the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, by the time they graduate. This requirement includes the following:

- Participating in departmental intellectual life, which includes but is not limited to meeting with outside speakers, attending talks and in-house conferences, presenting their own research, assisting with graduate student recruitment, and helping to organize in-house conferences (e.g., CPAC)
- Participating in an MTE for a "core" course in the student’s field of study; "core" courses include introductory courses, Quantitative Political Methods, and other courses considered "core" by the DGS
- Giving at least one supervised guest lecture or presentation
- Participating in the MTE or teaching a class that involves regular interaction with students

The Department of Political Science has its own unique Mentored Experience Requirement Implementation Plan (PDF), that all students in this program should review.

AM in Statistics

Students pursuing a PhD in political science may apply for a tailored AM in statistics. The completion of this program should not add any more time to a student’s time to degree. Students should consult with Professor Betsy Sinclair (https://polisci.wustl.edu/people/betsy-sinclair/) if they are interested in pursuing this AM degree.