Political Science

Degrees Offered

- Master of Arts
- Doctor of Philosophy

Nature of the Program

The graduate program is designed to provide advanced training to students who desire to enter research or teaching fields relating to American politics, public policy (either U.S. domestic or international), comparative politics, and/or international politics, and to those seeking careers as policy analysts in government or the private sector.

The Master of Arts program is designed to provide students with a broad knowledge of political science and the policy-making process. This includes the study of many over-arching factors shaping political thought, analysis, decision-making, and an examination of specific influences that shape public policies at the international, national, state, and local levels of government. Students choose from classes offered in the fields of American politics, comparative politics, international relations, and public policy in addition to taking three classes in political methodology designed to ensure students possess expertise in how to conduct systematic quantitative research. Most graduates will take jobs in government or with private firms needing specialists in policy analysis; however, this degree also leaves students well-placed for further study of these issues in Ph.D. programs.

The Doctor of Philosophy program is designed for people planning careers as researchers and teachers in institutions of higher education or as policy analysts in government or the private sector. All students are expected to complete coursework that leads to mastery of two of the four available areas of emphasis -- American politics, comparative politics, international politics, and public policy -- and to pass general exams in two of them. The student's coursework will provide them with a firm grounding in relevant literatures and prepare them to make their own contributions to the fields in which they specialize. Coursework is also available to train students as expert analysts who will leave the program with a comprehensive knowledge of policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation, as well as a thorough understanding of the dynamics of political institutions. The design of the program will ensure that our graduates are trained in research methodology and statistical techniques.

FACULTY

CHAIR
- John Kilwein - Ph.D. (Ohio State University)
  Associate Professor, Public Law, Judicial Politics, Public Policy, Public Administration

PROFESSORS
- Joe D. Hagan - Ph.D. (University of Kentucky)
  Barnette Professor, International Relations and World Politics, Comparative Foreign Policy Analysis
- Erik Herron - Ph.D. (Michigan State University)
  Eberly Family Professor, Political Institutions, Elections, Post-Communist Europe and Eurasia
- Sam Workman - Ph.D. (University of Washington)
  Director - Institute for Policy Research and Public Affairs, John D. "Jay" Rockefeller School of Policy and Politics

ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS
- R. Scott Crichlow - Ph.D. (Louisiana State University)
  International Relations, Foreign Policy Decision-making, Middle East Politics
- Christina Fattore - Ph.D. (Florida State University)
  International Political Economy, International Organization, European Union Politics
- William Franko - Ph.D. (University of Iowa)
  American Politics, State and Local Politics, Public Policy
- Matthew Jacobsmeier - Ph.D. (University of Rochester)
  American Politics, Political Behavior, Public Opinion, Research Methods
- Jason MacDonald - Ph.D. (The George Washington University)
  American Politics, Congress, Research Methods
- Philip Michelbach - Ph.D. (University of California)
  Political Theory, American Political Thought, German Political Thought, Comparative Democratic Theory
- Mason Moseley - Ph.D. (Vanderbilt University)
  Comparative Politics, Latin American Politics, Comparative Political Institutions
• Trisha Phillips - Ph.D. (Rice University)
  Social and Political Philosophy, Moral Philosophy, Research Ethics

ASSISTANT PROFESSORS
• Jay Krebsiel - Ph.D. (Washington University)
  Comparative Politics, Judicial Politics, Comparative Political Institutions
• Herschel Thomas - Ph.D. (University of Texas)
  Public Policy, Interest Groups

TEACHING ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS
• Boris Barkanov - Ph.D. (University of California, Berkeley)
  Comparative Politics, International Relations
• Clarissa Estep - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)
  International Relations
• David Hauser - Ph.D. (University of Pittsburgh)
  International Conflict, National Security Analysis

SERVICE ASSISTANT PROFESSORS
• Samantha Godbey - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)
  Director of Debate, Comparative Politics, International Relations, Public Policy

Admissions

M.A. IN POLITICAL SCIENCE
In addition to the university requirements for admission (http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/graduateeducationatwestvirginiauniversity/#classificationstext), applicants to the master’s program must have an overall undergraduate and/or graduate grade point average of 3.0 or better to be considered for admission as a regular graduate student. Applicants typically have completed a B.A. in Political Science, but students from other fields and disciplines are also encouraged to apply.

Applicants to the M.A. program must secure letters of recommendation from three academic or professional references and must submit a CV or resume and a statement of purpose, and transcripts from all institutions that an applicant has attended or is attending. The department is especially interested in receiving letters of recommendation from professors that you have had in undergraduate and/or graduate courses who are well-positioned to assess your potential for success in graduate school. If you have a supervisor from your employment history who is well-positioned to discuss your intellectual potential, a recommendation from that supervisor may be appropriate as well. You will be asked to provide contact information for your letter writers when you apply through the university’s online application system. Your letter writers will then be able to submit their letters electronically. The statement of purpose should be approximately 200-500 words in length. It should describe your intellectual and career goals and how the M.A. program will help you achieve those goals.

PH.D. IN POLITICAL SCIENCE
Admission to the doctoral program in Political Science is open to applicants with either a bachelor’s or master’s degree. In addition to the university requirements for admission (http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/graduateeducationatwestvirginiauniversity/#classificationstext), applicants to the Ph.D. program must have an overall undergraduate and/or graduate grade point average of 3.0 or better to be considered for admission as a regular graduate student. Admission to the Ph.D. is competitive; on average, successful applicants typically have earned a 3.5 or better GPA. Applicants to the Ph.D. program typically have completed a degree in Political Science, but students from other fields and disciplines are also encouraged to apply. Some training in statistics and a strong background in written communication is desired.

All applicants to the Ph.D. program must submit the results of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test. Applicants must also secure letters of recommendation from three academic or professional references and must submit a CV or resume, a statement of purpose, and transcripts from all institutions that an applicant has attended or is attending. The department is especially interested in receiving letters of recommendation from professors that you have had in undergraduate and/or graduate courses who are well-positioned to assess your potential for success in graduate school. If you have a supervisor from your employment history who is well-positioned to discuss your intellectual potential, a recommendation from that supervisor may be appropriate as well. You will be asked to provide contact information for your letter writers when you apply through the university’s online application system. Your letter writers will then be able to submit their letters electronically. The statement of purpose should be approximately 200-500 words in length. It should describe your intellectual and career goals and how the Ph.D. program will help you achieve those goals.

List of Admission Requirements for the M.A.:
• See the steps to apply for admissions and access the application here (https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/how-to-apply/)
• Transcripts from all institutions attended
• Three letters of recommendation from academic or professional references
List of Admission Requirements for the Ph.D.:
• See the steps to apply for admissions and access the application here (https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/how-to-apply/)
• Transcripts from all institutions attended
• GRE Scores
• Three letters of recommendation from academic or professional references
• Curriculum Vitae or Resume
• Statement of purpose

International Applicants:
• See the steps to apply for admissions and access the application here (https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/how-to-apply/)
• International applications should view additional requirements here (http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/graduateeducationatwestvirginiauniversity/internationaltext) and here (https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/information-for/international-students/)
• Language proficiency is required in order to hold a graduate teaching assistantship. See here (https://elli.wvu.edu/testing-resources/english-proficiency-gtas/).

Application Deadlines:
• The Political Science graduate programs admit for the Fall semester and consider applicants for that term on a rolling basis. Applicants for the spring semester are only considered in exceptional circumstances.
• Applicants who wish to be considered for graduate assistantships and/or tuition support should submit a complete application by January 15.
• The department welcomes applications the January 15 deadline, but applicants applying after this date may not receive full consideration for support.
• Exceptional Ph.D. applicants who apply by January 15 may be nominated by the Political Science program for competitive University Fellowships. Qualified applicants will be notified if they are nominated. More information on WVU fellowships can be found here (https://graduateeducation.wvu.edu/fellowships/).

Admissions decisions to the Political Science graduate programs are based on an overall assessment of an applicant's record. Certain application requirements may be waived based on a preliminary review of an application by the program.

Admission Requirements 2023-2024
The Admission Requirements above will be the same for the 2023-2024 Academic Year.

M.A. PROGRAM
Regular graduate students should be able to complete the MA in four semesters, provided they enter the program in the fall semester and have sufficient background in statistics and political science. See the section of the catalog on time limits (http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/advisingcoursesdegrees/degree_regulations/#timelimitstext) for additional information.

For specific information on the following program, please see the link to the right:
• Political Science, M.A.

For specific information on the following program, please see the link to the right:
• Political Science, Ph.D.

Degree Progress
The Director of Graduate studies serves as the initial advisor for all incoming graduate students. Each student will have a plan of study by the conclusion of the first semester of residence. At least once each academic year, all students will receive an evaluation reviewed by the graduate faculty.

M.A. PROGRAM
After the first year in residence, each PhD student should select a permanent faculty advisor.

In addition to the required coursework, Ph.D. students must successfully complete the following tasks prior to graduation:
• Comprehensive Exam in Field 1
• Comprehensive Exam in Field 2
• Dissertation Prospectus Defense
• Dissertation Defense
• Submission of Approved Dissertation to ETD

More information can be found in the Political Science Department Graduate Student Handbook (https://politicalscience.wvu.edu/graduate/current-graduate-students/graduate-handbook/).

COURSES

POLS 522. Racial & Ethnic Politics. 3 Hours.
This course examines contemporary research on the influence of race and ethnicity on U.S. politics. The focus is on African American politics, and, to a lesser extent, Latino or Hispanic politics; the politics of other racial and ethnic groups are also discussed.

POLS 530. Policy Analysis. 3 Hours.
Overview of the field of political science and the sub-field of public policy studies. Focuses on the issues and problems involved in studying policymaking, and an assessment of policy analysis as a mode of thinking and inquiry. (3 hr. seminar.).

POLS 536. Politics of Agenda Setting. 3 Hours.
Examines the social, economic, institutional and political influences on the development of public problems and their placement on the policy agenda. (3 hr. seminar.).

POLS 550. Comparative Politics. 3 Hours.
Survey of the subfield of Comparative Politics within Political Science. Course includes an introduction to the major methods and theoretical perspectives employed in the field including an overview of rational, structural and cultural perspectives.

POLS 551. Comparative Political Institutions. 3 Hours.
This course covers core debates in the study of comparative political institutions. Students discuss constitutional engineering, parliamentary versus presidential systems, electoral rules, party systems, representation, legislative rules of procedure, federalism, veto points, and other topics.

POLS 555. Comparative Public Policy. 3 Hours.
Comparison of public policy stages in several advanced industrial democracies with emphasis on various explanations of public policy in these countries in different policy areas. (3 hr. seminar.).

POLS 559. Contentious Politics. 3 Hours.
This is a course sub-field of political science, encompassing International Relations, Comparative and American Politics. This course presents a survey of the main concepts, theoretical debates, and methodological approaches in the field.

POLS 560. International Theory and Policy. 3 Hours.
Survey of theoretical approaches in the study of international relations, covering major works in the realist, neo-liberal, and foreign policy literature. Emphasis on the place of foreign policy explanations within the wider, systemic international relations literature. (3 hr. seminar.).

POLS 591. Advanced Topics. 1-6 Hours.
PR: Consent. Investigation of advanced topics not covered in regularly scheduled courses.

POLS 593. Special Topics. 1-6 Hours.
A study of contemporary topics selected from recent developments in the field.

POLS 600. Introduction to Political Research. 3 Hours.
Introduction to the research methods and techniques used in political and policy analysis. Topics include logic of inquiry, research design, measurement, and survey and unobtrusive research.

POLS 601. Quantitative Political Analysis. 3 Hours.
PR: POLS 600 and STAT 511, or equivalent. Application of a range of statistical techniques in political and public policy research. Includes use of selected computer software commonly used in political science and policy analysis.

POLS 602. Advanced Quantitative Methods. 3 Hours.
PR: POLS 601 or equivalent advanced topics in quantitative methods for political science and policy research. Methods surveyed include multiple linear regression, time-series analysis, causal modeling, and linear programming.

POLS 603. Advanced Quantitative Analysis. 3 Hours.
POLS 603. Advanced Quantitative Analysis. 3 hr. A survey of advanced statistical applications in political science, covering time series analysis, maximum likelihood estimation, and structural equation modeling.

POLS 630. Seminar: American Politics and Policy. 3 Hours.
A survey of classic and contemporary literature on U.S. politics and policy. Emphasis on how various institutions and linkage mechanisms affect the policy process. (3 hr. seminar.).
POLS 638. Seminar: Policy Implementation. 3 Hours.
Research seminar focusing on how the intentions of policy-makers are transformed into programs and policies which have both intended and unintended consequences. Topics include traditional implementation studies, rational choice approaches, neo-institutionalism, and principal-agent theory. (3 hr. seminar.).

POLS 660. International Political Economy. 3 Hours.
Advanced theoretical courses in IPE. Topics include capital financial and trade liberalization, economic development, regionalism, and the intricacies between domestic governments and international economic relations.

POLS 665. Comparative Foreign Policy. 3 Hours.
Application of the comparative method of theoretically assessing the mainly domestic sources of conflict and change in foreign policy beyond the U.S. case and in cross-national and historical perspective.

POLS 666. National Security Policy. 3 Hours.
Overview of security policy issues as both foreign and domestic policy. Traces the development of defense and security, arms transfers, spending tradeoffs, deterrence, game theoretic decision models, intelligence analysis, and terrorism.

POLS 667. Foreign Policy Decision Making. 3 Hours.
This course examines the roots of foreign policy decision making. It examines how ideational, cultural, institutional and political variables constrain decision makers, and how the core psychological characteristics of decision makers shape their behavior.

POLS 670. Professional Seminar in Political Theory. 3 Hours.

POLS 691. Advanced Topics. 1-6 Hours.
PR: Consent. Investigation of advanced topics not covered in regularly scheduled courses.

POLS 703. Internship. 6-9 Hours.
per semester; students may enroll more than once. PR: Consent.

POLS 710. Judicial Politics, Policy and Law. 3 Hours.
Judicial influence on American public policy with emphasis on the political theory of American law, the agenda of disputes, the formulation of public policy by courts, and the effects of judicial policy on politics. (3 hr. seminar.).

POLS 712. American Construction and Political Development. 3 Hours.
The development of American political institutions, with emphasis on theoretical underpinnings of American politics and the role of courts and the Constitution in defining the scope of political change in America.

POLS 715. The American Presidency. 1-6 Hours.
This course examines how the president interfaces with other power centers in the political system, and assesses the extent to which this institution is capable of meeting what we have come to expect of it.

POLS 728. Congress. 3 Hours.
Students engage research literature on the U.S. Congress, examining theories of member behavior, the role of political parties, the endogenous creation and reform of congressional institutions, and other areas of research on Congress.

POLS 790. Teaching Practicum. 1-3 Hours.
PR: Consent. Supervised practice in college teaching of political science Note: This course is intended to insure that graduate assistants are adequately prepared and supervised when they are given college teaching responsibility. It will also present a mechanism for students not on assistantships to gain teaching experience. (Grading will be P/F.).

POLS 791. Advanced Topics. 1-6 Hours.
PR: Consent. Investigation of advanced topics not covered in regularly scheduled courses.

POLS 792. Directed Study. 1-6 Hours.
Directed study, reading, and/or research.

POLS 793. Special Topics. 1-6 Hours.
A study of contemporary topics selected from recent developments in the field.

POLS 794. Seminar. 1-6 Hours.
Special seminars arranged for advanced graduate students.

POLS 795. Independent Study. 1-9 Hours.
Faculty supervised study of topics not available through regular course offerings.

POLS 796. Graduate Seminar. 1-3 Hours.
PR: Consent. Each graduate student will present at least one seminar to the assembled faculty and graduate student body of his or her program.

POLS 797. Research. 1-9 Hours.
PR: Consent. Research activities leading to thesis, problem report, research paper or equivalent scholarly project, or a dissertation. (Grading may be S/U.).