

POLITICAL SCIENCE, MA

Degree: Master of Arts (MA)
Field of Study: Political Science

Admissions

Applicants to the Master of Arts program in political science are required to submit their undergraduate transcripts and three letters of recommendation from former instructors. The admission requirements also include GRE results with minimum scores of 153 on Verbal (or 500 if taken before August 1, 2011), 144 on Quantitative (or 500 if taken before August 1, 2011), and 4.5 on Analytical sections. The department strongly prefers that applicants have a minimum GPA of 3.2 overall and a minimum GPA of 3.4 in political science courses. For students from other countries, the requirements are a minimum score of 550 on the paper version of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), or at least 215 on the computer version of the TOEFL; the minimum GRE scores indicated above; and transcripts of all undergraduate study, indicating completion of a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree program.

Graduate Policies

For graduate policies and procedures, please review the School of Graduate Studies section of the General Bulletin.

Program Requirements

The Master of Arts in political science is a broadly based program in which the student is expected to acquire and exhibit general knowledge and skills. Therefore, within the 30 hours of graduate-level coursework (400 level and above) required for the master's, 12 hours must be distributed as follows:

Code	Title	Hours
Required Courses		
One course in the area of American government and politics		3
One course in the area of comparative politics		3
One course in the area of international relations		3
POSC 449	Political Science Research Methods	3
Total Hours		12

Students who receive permission (due to special circumstances) from the graduate coordinator may take an alternative research methods course outside the department.

Among the remaining 18 hours of electives, the student will select courses to fit a plan to complete a thesis (in Plan A below) or complete an examination in two fields (Plan B below), as approved by the graduate studies director. A maximum of 9 hours may be taken outside the Department of Political Science, with prior approval from the graduate studies director, for specialized work related to the master's degree for which no political science course is appropriate. A maximum of nine hours of independent study may count toward the degree.

A minimum grade point average of 3.0 must be maintained throughout the Master of Arts program. A master's student who fails to maintain a GPA of 3.0 will be placed on academic probation for one semester. If the GPA is not returned to the 3.0 minimum by the end of the probationary

semester, the student will be separated from further study in the department.

Plan A: MA Thesis

An MA Thesis should be a major research paper equivalent to at least six hours of registration. Students shall register for POSC 651 Thesis M.A., which will count towards the 30 hours of course work required for completion of the MA. An MA Thesis will be read by a committee of three members of the faculty, and defended in an oral examination with the faculty committee. The committee shall vote on approval of the thesis after the oral defense. A majority vote will suffice to approve the thesis.

Students must define their thesis topic no later than the last week of the semester before the semester in which they expect to defend the thesis. The thesis supervisor will be selected by mutual agreement between the student and the faculty member who agrees to supervise. The topic must be defined before the student registers for POSC 651, and a permit for the course must be issued by the faculty supervisor. The student must prepare a prospectus describing the research question and research plans before the permit can be issued. The prospectus must be approved by both the faculty supervisor and the department's graduate studies director. The director shall appoint the two other members of the examination committee. The graduate studies director will also schedule the oral defense, with assistance from the department staff.

Plan B: MA Examination

For the MA Examination, students should be able to explain, critique, integrate and apply the arguments of leading works in two out of the three fields of American Politics and Government, Comparative Politics, and International Relations. The examination is a written test of five hours' duration, with 150 minutes for each of the chosen subfields. A student who chooses Plan B must request scheduling of the examination upon completion of no fewer than 30 hours and no more than 42 hours of master's-level course work.

The examination is administered in a controlled, closed-book setting. The department maintains, on its website, MA reading lists of major scholarly works within the three fields listed above, and test questions will be based upon an expectation that the student has thoroughly studied – whether in or outside of classes – the works designated on those lists. Faculty members within each subfield write the questions for that subfield, which are then assembled by the graduate studies director, who is responsible for scheduling the exam.

The student must notify his or her faculty advisor and the graduate studies director of intent to take the exam, and the two subfields chosen, at least six weeks before he or she wishes to take it. Each section of the examination will be graded by two members of the faculty. The two faculty members must agree that the student has performed acceptably on that section of the examination in order for the student to pass on that section. The student must pass both sections to pass the exam.

Grading for the exam is Honors, Pass, or Fail. If the exam is failed, a student will have one calendar year in which to retake the exam. We expect the student will need at least one semester to prepare for retaking the exam. During the interim, the political science faculty may require the student to take additional classes to help address the concerns raised by the failed exam segment or segments. If the student does not pass the exam on a second attempt, she or he will be separated from the department. Please note that university regulations require that students be registered for course work during any semester during which the MA Exam is taken. A student who does not enroll in other

courses should enroll for one hour of EXAM 600 Master's Comprehensive Exam (noncredit).

Dual Degree Options

- Law, JD/Political Science, MA