

POLITICAL SCIENCE, PH.D.

The Department of Political Science offers a Political Science, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

Admissions

The PhD is primarily a research degree, and students in this program will be trained rigorously in the literature and methods necessary to conduct original research in the discipline. Students will also gain valuable experience in classroom teaching, thus improving their prospects on the academic job market and preparing them for life as a full-time faculty member.

The Political Science Department maintains a selective PhD program and invites applications for consideration by the department's Graduate Studies Committee. Applicants should submit their applications by December 1 for full funding consideration. The final deadline for all applications is February 15 for admission the following fall.

In addition to the minimum Graduate School admission requirements, to be considered for regular admission an application must include:

- 3 letters or recommendation
- A resume

Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTAs) are available through the Department on a competitive basis. All new applicants to the Ph.D. program will automatically be considered for funding. Most GTA positions are awarded beginning in the fall term.

See the Admission Criteria section of this catalog for more information.

Curricular Requirements

Students will be expected to attain a satisfactory degree of knowledge and competence in two of the following fields of Political Science: American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, Public Policy & Administration, and Political Theory.

PhD students must complete at least 39 credit hours of graduate coursework. Students will designate one field as the major field of study and the other as a minor field. At least 15 hours above the bachelor's degree (including transferred credit) must be in the major field, and 9 hours in the minor field. Students pursuing the PhD degree must also complete 9 semester hours of methodology courses: PSC 521 Research Design, PSC 522 Quantitative Methods I, and PSC 621 Quantitative Methods II. Please see "PhD Courses by Subfield" below for a detailed list of the courses that count for each subfield.

PhD Curriculum	Hours
Major field: 5 courses - core course required	15
1st Minor: 3 courses - core course required	9
Methods: 3 courses	
PSC 521 Research Design	3
PSC 522 Quant Methods PSC I	3
PSC 621 Quant Meth In PSC II	3
Elective: 1 course	3
Professionalization: 2 courses	
PSC 500 Departmental Seminar I	1.5
PSC 501 Departmental Seminar II	1.5
Total Hours	39

PhD Courses by Subfield	Hours
Required Department/Methods Courses:	
PSC 500 Departmental Seminar I	1.5
PSC 501 Departmental Seminar II	1.5
PSC 521 Research Design	3
PSC 522 Quant Methods PSC I	3
PSC 621 Quant Meth In PSC II	3
Independent Studies/Directed Readings/Thesis Research (not required; can potentially count for any field)	
PSC 595 Dir Reading & Research	1-6
PSC 598 Dir Reading & Research	1-6
PSC 679 Internship & Research	3-6
PSC 699 Dissertation Research (Required for PhD)	1-12
American Politics	
PSC 610 American Core (Required if majoring or minoring in subfield)	3
PSC 511 Public Opinion	3
PSC 515 US Institutions	3
PSC 552 American Political Thought	3
PSC 611 Amer Polit Behavior	3
PSC 612 Judicial Politics	3
PSC 614 Race and American Politics	3
PSC 616 Topics In American Politics	3
Public Policy and Administration	
PSC 562 Public Personnel Admin	3
PSC 565 Foundations of Public Admin	3
PSC 668 Program Evaluation	3
PSC 664 Public Policy Analysis	3
PSC 662 Organization Theory	3
PSC 667 Public Budgeting	3
PSC 665 Local Government Admin	3
PSC 522 Quant Methods PSC I	3
PSC 679 Internship & Research	3-6
International Relations	
PSC 642 Core Seminar in IR (Required if majoring or minoring in subfield)	3
PSC 542 Internatl Conflict	3
PSC 641 Issues Internatl Rel	3
PSC 643 IR Theory (I): Realism	3
PSC 645 IR Theory (II): IR-Liberalism	3
PSC 646 Civil Wars	3
PSC 647 Foreign Policy Decision Making	3
Comparative Politics	
PSC 631 Sem Comparative Politic (Required if majoring or minoring in subfield)	3
PSC 632 Spec Topics Comparative Pol	3
Political Theory	
PSC 651 Political Theory Sem (Required if majoring or minoring in subfield)	3

PSC 552	American Political Thought	3
PSC 653	Special Topics	3

Refer to the Graduate School Doctoral degree requirements page for more information.

Transfer Credit

PhD students may request to transfer a maximum of 19 credit hours from another institution, subject to Departmental approval. Students must provide syllabi for all courses for which transfer credit is requested. Decisions on granting transfer credit will be made by the Director of Graduate Studies in consultation with the faculty member(s) teaching the most nearly equivalent UA course. In order to receive transfer credit, courses must be judged to have a workload and content comparable to departmental graduate courses. Core seminars in each field must be taken in residence.

Refer to the Graduate School Doctoral degree requirements page for more information.

Doctoral Plan of Study Requirement

Refer to the Graduate School Doctoral degree requirements page for more information.

Comprehensive Exams

These examinations will be taken in the student's major field of study and the minor field. Students are eligible to take comprehensive exams no earlier than the semester after completing their required coursework, and when they have completed not less than two full years of graduate study. Unless extraordinary extenuating circumstances prevent it, graduate students are expected to take comprehensive exams in both their major and minor fields the semester after completing the required coursework.

Major field comprehensive examinations for the Fall semester will take place the third Tuesday of each September, and a minor field comprehensive exam will take place the fourth Tuesday of each September. Major field comprehensive examinations for the Spring semester will take place the second half of March on a date to be determined by the Director of Graduate Studies each year. Spring minor field comprehensive examinations will take place one week after the major field examinations. The Director of Graduate Studies solicits exam coordinators for each field. The exam coordinators will develop the comprehensive examination in consultation with relevant colleagues in the field.

Fieldwork/Practicum/Internship Requirements

Foreign language competence may be required of Ph. D. students if appropriate to the student's research interests as determined by relevant faculty in the student's major field of study.

Admission to Candidacy Requirements

Students who have fulfilled the course requirements and passed the comprehensive examinations in their major field and minor field become PhD candidates. No student may formally declare a dissertation topic until advancing to candidacy, but earlier preliminary inquiry and research on the dissertation topic is strongly encouraged.

Continuous Enrollment Policy

Following admission to candidacy, students must remain in continuous registration until completion of the dissertation. Students must register each semester for at least one hour of PSC 699 Dissertation Research.

Dissertation Requirements

A dissertation showing the ability to conduct independent research and skill in organization, writing, and presentation must be prepared on a topic in the major field for the PhD. It must constitute an original contribution to knowledge. The dissertation must be based upon research completed while the student is enrolled at The University of Alabama.

The subject of the dissertation must be approved by the student's dissertation committee and by the dean of the Graduate School. The final dissertation may take the form of a traditional, chapter-based document or a series of full-length publication-ready manuscripts which are part of a larger, cohesive body of work. The format (traditional vs. article-style) must be approved by the committee in accordance with the standards for the program and the discipline.

For article-style dissertations, the document must contain a minimum of three articles, in addition to introductory and concluding materials. A single abstract must accompany the document. In addition to an introduction presenting the unifying framework that supports the research, the document must include a concluding section that summarizes the importance of the work, integrates the major findings, and discusses the implications for the overall body of work. Individual chapters may be co-authored so long as the student is the first author, and such co-authoring must be approved by the committee. Typically, other students will not be co-authors to dissertation chapters except under unanimous consent by the dissertation committee. Students who have already defended prospectuses can be retrospectively approved for article-style dissertations. A minimum of eighteen credit hours of PSC 699 Dissertation Research is required for the PhD.

The dissertation committee consists of a minimum of five members. Faculty from the University of Alabama Department of Political Science must make up a majority of the committee, and the committee must include at least one member from outside the University of Alabama Department of Political Science. Typically, the chair of the dissertation committee will be a full (i.e. tenured) member of the Graduate Faculty and tenured member of the Department of Political Science. The dissertation committee is formally established by the department chair. All members must be approved by the dean of the Graduate School.

Students are expected to submit and defend their completed dissertation prospectus by the end of the semester following successful completion of comprehensive examinations. This will typically be the end of the sixth semester. The dissertation committee chair will determine when the prospectus is ready for distribution to the dissertation committee. Upon approval by the dissertation committee chair and consent of the dissertation committee, an oral defense of the prospectus will occur.

Time Limits for Degree Completion Requirements

All requirements for the PhD program must be completed within the nine-year period (27 fall, spring, and summer semesters) following admission to the PhD program if the student enters the program without a Master's degree in Political Science. Students entering the program with a Master's degree must complete all requirements within eight years (24 fall, spring, and summer semesters).

Refer to the Graduate School Doctoral degree requirements page for more information.

Student Progress Requirement

To be making “good progress”, students are generally expected to: 1) complete all coursework by the end of the fourth semester; 2) take comprehensive examinations during the fifth semester; 3) successfully defend the prospectus by the end of the sixth semester; and 4) demonstrate substantive progress on their dissertation each semester of taking 699, as determined by the dissertation advisor.##Students who fail to maintain good progress in the program risk dismissal.##Sometimes life events can complicate such a timeline, but students will typically be expected to adhere to this schedule. Substantial deviations must be discussed with and approved by both the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Chair.

After the end of each Spring semester (prior to May 15), there will be a faculty-wide review of all graduate students.##We anticipate most of these reviews will be positive, and all students will receive brief written feedback from the Director of Graduate Studies regarding their review.

However, if students are deemed not to be making sufficiently “good progress” through the program, they will be notified in writing that they have until the end of the spring of the following school year to get back to making degree progress, and they will be given clear guidelines for remediation. Typically, this will mean getting back on time with the degree schedule elaborated above.

If the student fails to complete the remediation plan by the time of the next faculty-wide review in May, the student may be dismissed from the program with the opportunity to earn a Master’s degree.

If a student fails to take comprehensive examinations by the end of the fifth semester, that student will be notified in writing by the Director of Graduate Studies that they must take comprehensive exams by the end of the sixth semester. Failure to do so may result in dismissal from the program.##Similarly, if a student fails to defend a prospectus by the end of the sixth semester, that student will be notified in writing by the Director of Graduate Studies that they must defend the prospectus by the end of the seventh semester.##Failure to do so may result in dismissal from the program with a Master’s degree.

Students may petition the Director of Graduate Studies for a delay in taking comprehensive examinations and defending the prospectus under extraordinary circumstances (e.g., medical emergency).

Additional Academic Requirements

First-year Ph.D. students are required to register for PSC 500 Departmental Seminar I in the Fall semester and PSC 501 Departmental Seminar II in the Spring semester. These courses are professional socialization seminars that are offered on a pass/fail basis for 1.5 credit each. These courses cover numerous topics such as effective teaching strategies; attending and participating in political science conferences; publishing your work in professional journals; the academic job market; and ethical issues facing instructors and researchers.

These courses will meet approximately twice each month, with the Director of Graduate Studies and/or a faculty member coordinating the discussion. In addition to the class meetings, students will also attend research presentations and job talks as part of the professionalization process.

Academic Misconduct Information

Refer to the Graduate School academic misconduct policy page for more information.

Withdrawals and Leave of Absence Information

Refer to the Graduate School withdrawals and leave of absence policy page for more information.

Academic Grievances Information

Refer to the Graduate School academic grievance procedure page for more information.

Grades and Academic Standing

Refer to the Graduate School grades and academic standing page for more information.

Graduate School Deadlines Information

Refer to the Graduate School student deadlines page for more information.

Application for Graduate Information

Refer to the Graduate School Doctoral degree requirements page for more information.

Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTAs) are available through the Department on a competitive basis for Ph.D. students. All new applicants to the Ph.D. program will automatically be considered for funding. Most GTA positions are awarded beginning in the Fall term. To ensure full consideration for GTA positions applicants must submit all required application materials by the application deadline. Funding decisions will begin soon after that and will continue until all positions are filled.

International students who are awarded GTA positions must enroll in the International Teaching Assistant Program (ITAP) and pass a proficiency exam before teaching their own courses. They must pass this exam by the end of the summer following their first year of funding or risk losing funding.

In addition to GTA positions, the Graduate School and College offer fellowships and financial awards. All new applicants to the Ph.D. program are considered for these fellowships and awards. The decision process on these awards runs from December through early March. Applications received by December 1 will be eligible for consideration for all rounds of funding.

Graduate Teaching Assistants are appointed for a term of either one semester or one academic year (although GTA’s may be subject to immediate termination if they repeatedly fail to meet their GTA responsibilities). In most cases, assistantships are available for a total of 10 semesters. Application is required each academic year. Renewal is not automatic. Factors affecting renewal include maintenance of an exemplary academic record, progress toward the degree sought, and successful conduct of GTA duties.

To remain eligible for continuing appointment, the Graduate School requires that a student’s overall grade point average must always remain at or above 3.00. The computation of grade point averages includes treating incompletes as grades of “F” if they are not removed within 2 weeks of the semester following that in which the incomplete grade was given. If such a computation occurs, a GTA will have the assistantship removed by action of the Graduate Studies Committee, unless acceptable arrangements are made, or the grade of incomplete is removed.

Each spring semester, the Director of Graduate Studies will send out an email announcing the deadline to apply for a GTA position for the following academic year. In a few cases, typically in conjunction with a

Graduate Council Fellowship or some other fellowship, the Department will commit to providing an assistantship to a student for more than one year. In such cases, the student should still apply for re-appointment to remind the graduate studies committee to hold a GTA slot for the student. All commitments of this type are contingent upon the students remaining in good standing in the graduate program and performing all GTA duties in keeping with the Department's specifications and standards. As with other GTAs, multi-year GTAs must meet all Department and Graduate School requirements, including those relating to minimum grade point averages.

To be making "good progress", students are generally expected to: 1) complete all coursework by the end of the fourth semester; 2) take comprehensive examinations during the fifth semester; 3) successfully defend the prospectus by the end of the sixth semester; and 4) demonstrate substantive progress on their dissertation each semester of taking 699. Students who fail to maintain good progress in the program risk loss of GTA funding and/or potential invitation to exit the PhD program with an M.A. degree. Sometimes life events can complicate such a timeline, but students will typically be expected to adhere to this schedule. Substantial deviations must be discussed with and approved by both the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Chair.

After the end of each Spring semester (prior to May 15), there will be a faculty-wide review of all graduate students carrying a graduate teaching assistantship. We anticipate most of these reviews will be positive, and all students will receive brief written feedback from the Director of Graduate Studies regarding their review. However, if students are deemed not to be making sufficiently "good progress" through the program, continued GTA funding may be at risk, and post-comps students may be recommended to exit the program with a Master's degree. Pre-comps students will be invited to take M.A. comprehensive exams in the Spring semester of the second year and exit with a Master's degree.

Emphasis will be given to first-year students. If the first-year reviews by faculty indicate serious concern about a student's ability to be successful in the PhD program, faculty in attendance will vote regarding whether the student should be steered toward exit from the PhD program with an M.A. degree. This would include a second year of funding to finish the M.A.